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A Policy for Smash and Crash

JUL 8 1976

No one, getting even a TV glimpse of last week's SNP conference, could have been left in any doubt that the Labour Government and the Scottish National Party are now set on a collision course. Neither the Devolution White Paper of September 1974 nor the Government's second White Paper of November 1975 – nor Mr Foot's concessions on the latter announced just before Parliament rose last week – appear to have done anything to modify the clamour for full Scottish independence. True, the 11 SNP MPs have already pledged that they will vote for the Government's Devolution Bill when it eventually materialises this autumn; but, as they have been honest enough to make clear, they will be doing so only to give 'the continuous and ongoing process' of transferring all Westminster's powers to Edinburgh additional momentum. The Government may believe it is playing a careful game of constitutional chess: the SNP could hardly have made it plainer that what it is engaged in is a much more heady game of political draughts.

And, since draughts is a faster-moving game than chess, it looks increasingly as if the SNP will end up clearing the board. Take first of all the provision in last year's White Paper laying down that the Assembly shall be dependent for finance on a block grant from Whitehall. The White Paper, in fact, says (almost shamelessly) that the amount of that grant will be 'a matter for political judgment' – adding that it will each year 'be settled as part of the annual public expenditure review for the United Kingdom as a whole'. Could there be a more guaranteed recipe for regular and recurring scenes of recrimination under the television lights? What Scottish Chief Executive, after all, is going to be able to do anything else but appear on the steps of Number 10 each February/March and announce 'We wuz robbed'? (If he were to say anything more gracious, he would certainly not keep his leadership of the Assembly for long.)

Or take again the provision that Mr Foot slightly watered down last week. The 1975 White Paper, as well as reserving

power to the Secretary of State for Scotland (now transferred 'most probably' to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council) to declare any legislation passed by the Assembly *ultra vires*, also allowed the Westminster Parliament the right to reject any primary legislation on policy grounds. The White Paper stated that the Westminster Parliament would be invited to do this only if, in the Government's view, such legislation 'would be seriously harmful'; Mr Foot said, equally vaguely, on Tuesday of last week that such 'reserve powers' would now only be invoked in 'situations where their use is necessary to prevent unacceptable repercussions on matters for which the UK Government will remain answerable'. Either way the path could hardly have been more surely paved to encourage the grant of devolution to produce a demand for independence.

And yet the final Devolution Bill, presumably incorporating all such absurdities, is at most only five months away. How, it might be asked, were things ever allowed to reach this point, where it is already too late for the Government to back down on its devolution offer and equally fatal for it to press forward to put the present scheme into effect? The answer is an oddly simple one. British politics have always operated on 'the adversary principle': it may be slow and cumbersome – but there is a good deal to be said for governments being required to present their policies rather as if they were putting a case in a court-room. At least that way individual proposals are subjected to hostile scrutiny, tested for plausibility, even made to look suspect by cross-examination. Yet none of that happened on this occasion. Instead men of goodwill – if not of outstanding good sense – sat together for two years and played with constitutional Meccano sets. Mr Edward Short, Mr William Ross and Lord Crowther-Hunt have all now departed from the corridors of Whitehall. Last week Mr Michael Foot merely tinkered with their handiwork. He needs to be bolder. He should, in fact, destroy it and start again.

Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

The Biggest Thing in the World

I've just seen this thing. It's the biggest thing I've ever seen. I think it must be going to be the biggest thing in the world. Its base is the same size as Trafalgar Square, it will be taller than the Post Office tower, and its top will be the same size as Times Square. It's made of concrete, it will weigh 400,000 tons and it will float. It's being built on the side of Loch Kishorn, and one day soon it will be submerged and taken into the middle of the loch, then the next bits will be put on and, in the end, the whole thing will be towed away to the North Sea, filled up with another 200,000 tons of ballast, and thereby sunk into position. Sixty years later it may be picked up and moved on to another site, if that's what you want. In the meantime it will serve as a drilling platform on the Ninian Field.

But is it a platform? Is it a ship? Or is it a bird, or a fish, or a shooting star, or a state of mind? Is it a hybrid Bill? Here in Scotland, among these busy stretches of sheltered water, things appear generally to be what they generally appear to be. This mountain is a mountain. That tug is a tug. That cormorant, skimming purposefully across the smooth surface of the loch, is a cormorant. Or if it is not a cormorant, it's a shag. The possibilities are limited, and we are miles away from the world of Westminster, light years away from the mind of Robin Maxwell-Hyslop. The hectic divisions, the frantic activity of the Whips, the points of order, the accusations of bad faith all fade away. People ask us about Westminster, when they ask us, in worried tones. How's the patient doing? Was the attack as bad as all that? Is there any chance of recovery, or even partial recovery, of the senses? And we search in our memories, and remember that - yes - only last week we were at the bedside. We give diplomatic assurances that all is not yet lost.

On Friday morning Michael Heseltine apologised to the Speaker for having inadvertently stolen the mace: 'I know I've done wrong sir, and I'm thoroughly ashamed of myself. I've let the House down, I've let the school down, I've disgraced myself and my parents' name. I've shown that I'm not worthy to be a prefect. I've brought the debating society into disrepute.' From the way he gingerly took his place on the bench we may presume that he's already had a considerable caning from his head of house: 'Bend over Heseltine. You know this will hurt me more than it will hurt you. And get rid of that blotting paper.' One has to sympathise with the unfortunate man nevertheless. Like the American footballer who ran the wrong way in the Rose Bowl, he will be stigmatised for life. His parliamentary performances, on which he has worked so assiduously, particularly when shadowing

Tony Benn, will now be dreadfully undermined. At the slightest demonstration of passion he will be told 'Keep yer hands to yerself, Heseltine.' The *Tribune* heavy brigade - Dennis Skinner, Russell Kerr and Bob Cryer - who never allow anything to drop, and who are never afraid of repeating themselves, will be merciless, we may be sure. And we may be sure that Margaret Thatcher will be thinking quite carefully about his usefulness in the future.

And yet the problem Thatcher faces at the moment is fraught with the same temptation as that which overcame Heseltine: the temptation to go too far. For what, after all, was everyone writing about the shadow cabinet a few weeks ago? They were saying that it was a muted Opposition, a bunch of nonentities, a faceless front bench. Well, Heseltine has done something about that, hasn't he? And so has Humphrey Atkins and so has Thatcher. Circumstances have conspired to give the Opposition a rare chance to bring itself prominently before the public eye, and the opportunity of an electoral battle this year becomes daily less remote. Whatever criticism may be levelled at Thatcher as Tory leader it could not be said that she has been supine. After her calculated television performance, in which she welcomed Callaghan as the new leader of the Labour Party and wished him every success, she has not taken long to resume, as they say, a warlike posture. The question is, how far can she go without doing herself a damage, without 'doing a Heseltine'?

The closing of the 'usual channels' is a tempting tactic. It has already forced a government climb-down over the question of the composition of committees. It is a bloody nuisance, but it's more of a nuisance to the Government than to the Opposition, since the Opposition have nothing to do at the moment except make weekend speeches and money. Whereas the Government have commitments all over the world. A long hot summer in the lobbies, the serious possi-

bility of defeating Labour and of running the legislative programme into the sand, the uncertain loyalties of the SLP - if these opportunities are present it might be unwise to let them slip. That at any rate is what one tempting voice is murmuring in Thatcher's ear. But there is another voice which counsels caution, and gives the Tory leader pause as her hand reaches towards the mace.

For if a rumour of an uncertain result in the miners' ballot is enough to send the pound down, what would be the effect of an impasse in Westminster? What would be the reaction on the world market if Callaghan were forced to go to the country, as he has already warned us, through Ron Hayward, that he may? Thatcher is not blind to the disadvantage of being seen to be a wrecker, of having to fight an election on the theme 'Are we going to let Callaghan get on with the job he's just begun?' Most people in the country are behaving themselves. The Left in Parliament is normally behaving itself (Eric Heffer made a most statesmanlike speech on Friday morning - you'd hardly think he'd been leading the sing-song the night before). The TUC is doing its best to behave itself. The unemployed are generally behaving themselves. The working classes are being perfectly sweet about everything. So it would certainly be noticed if Thatcher decided to act like a hooligan. That, paradoxically, is the disadvantage of being Her Majesty's Leader of the Opposition at a time when the Government is in such obviously dire straits. Above all, she must avoid the charge of unpatriotic behaviour.

Here in Scotland, of course, things are slightly different. Things are happening. An all-season Santa Claus-land has just been opened at Aviemore. The police are hunting the cats of Leith. A couple of Maoist bank robbers are on the run from Peterhead Jail. In Motherwell, a vociferous audience leaps to its feet, inspired by the rhetoric of Douglas Henderson. Yes, they shout, yes to a general election, and yes we are going to win. At last, after the years of oppression, they are coming into their own. They ate up the Tories for breakfast. After the results in the Glasgow local government elections, they look well set to gobble up Labour for lunch. Terrible tartan thoughts are running through their minds - tartan toothpaste, tartan cheese, compulsory kilts.

In the 18th Century there was a prophecy that Applecross Mountain would give birth to a monster. Its sinews would be made of steel. Its flesh would be made of rock from another land. Its birth would be noisy and its stride would measure one league. At the foot of Applecross Mountain today, in a vast dry dock hewn from the living stone, they are constructing the Thing. Its sinews are of steel. Its ballast has been quarried in Skye. Down the Kyle line come the trucks bearing cement for its construction. A vast device like a towering lawn-sprinkler pours the liquid concrete into place. The noise of its construction has awoken local memories of the old prophecy and now it is nearing the time when the Thing must be dragged out into the loch. The first stage of its extraordinary journey will be exactly one league.

Applecross Mountain

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Peter Paterson

Nightmare at Nairobi

Mr Frank Judd, Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Overseas Development, sighed a little wearily. 'My name,' he said, 'is spelt J-U-D-D - not J-U-D-A-S.' He was reacting to the widespread criticism of the British role at the UNCTAD-4 conference in Nairobi, where his battered team of civil servants from the ministries of Agriculture, Trade, and Overseas Development were being assailed on all sides.

It wasn't entirely Judd's fault. He went to Nairobi only towards the end of the month-long conference, three weeks after a more senior minister, Mr Edmund Dell, Secretary for Trade, had demonstrated in a speech of mind-boggling boredom that the British Government had no intention of making any positive contribution to this important United Nations conference on trade and development issues. In the hiatus between Dell and Judd the British delegation fiddled and fidgeted, earning the round condemnation of many Third World countries and, most hurtful of all, of the Commonwealth representatives. All the credit earned by the Wilson initiatives at the Commonwealth trade conference in King-

ston, Jamaica, two years ago, was frittered away in a shifty performance of backtracking and evasion that offended and slightly astonished even our EEC partners.

Nor was the press any better served by the British presence. One of the big issues before the conference was the crippling debt burden of the poorest countries. How much would it cost Britain, journalists repeatedly asked, to forgo the official debts of the most seriously affected countries? No one knew, though it was conceded that someone had worked out some figures - which unfortunately had been left in London. But Britain's unhappy role - marginally improved in the last few days after the Prime Minister had told a deputation led by Mrs Judith Hart that 'more flexible' instructions would be sent to Nairobi - was a small and shoddy sideshow to the overall proceedings of UNCTAD-4.

The outcome of this month of hard bargaining, of recrimination, of threats and of vague promises, can only be judged by what the participants hoped at the beginning might emerge from it. The developing countries, under the banner of the mis-

named Group of 77 (actually, 113 countries are members of the Group) arrived in Nairobi with an ambitious programme, the Manila Declaration, for redressing the unfair terms of trade between the developed and the developing countries.

With the alluring example of the Opec countries before them, the 77 based their claims for a 'new international economic order' on fairer prices for the raw materials produced by the developing countries and consumed, largely, by the industrialised countries. As a rider, they sought special arrangements for the poorest countries which produce no saleable raw materials, together with a shopping list of concessions to be extracted from the developed world including a revision of the international patent laws to facilitate the transfer of technology from the West (and protection from the ravages of multinational corporations), indexation to compensate producers for Western inflation, and some tangible steps towards enabling more manufacturing processes - particularly of the commodities they produce themselves - to be carried out in the developing countries rather than in the industrialised nations.

In the face of such a challenge, the developed countries ran in all directions. The Americans, through Dr Kissinger, offered a package of assistance which included the establishment of an International Resources Bank and participation in a satellite communications programme, but which had little relevance to the Manila



'You should have seen the one that got away.'

Declaration or to the agenda on which the UNCTAD secretariat had been painfully working for two years.

The French allowed it to be known that they were in favour of compromise – and then wisely retreated into the luxurious accommodation they had secured for themselves in one of Nairobi's remaining leather-armchained colonial gentlemen's clubs, to be heard from no more. The Scandinavians and the Dutch – eventually backed by a wavering and indecisive Canadian delegation – came out solidly for the Manila demand for a Common Fund to stabilise commodity prices, and offered their contribution. West Germany took a hard and breathtakingly honest line. For them, the whole business smacked of an assault on the holy principles of free trade, and their Economics Minister, Dr Hans Friderichs, read the Third World a lecture on the benefits of free market economics and its relevance to their problems. Britain, with a Labour Administration at Westminster, could hardly follow the Friderichs language, but slavishly followed the tactical line of the Germans. Japan, with the biggest delegation in Nairobi, anxiously hopped behind, the biggest raw material consumer of all, hoping desperately that nothing decisive would happen.

And, aloof from it all, the Soviet bloc – harried on its flanks at every public session by the Chinese – disclaimed any responsibility for the results of capitalist exploitation and kept clear of any commitment to the Group of 77. Which was unfortunate, since the 77 disagree with the socialist countries over long-term barter deals, their refusal to make payments in convertible currency and the difficulty developing countries have in transferring surpluses from their trade with one Eastern country against deficits with another.

Meanwhile, the Group of 77 was having its own troubles. Intensive lobbying by the Americans led to some backsliding by people who owed them favours – particularly in Latin America and among some African states – which raised doubts about how far the Group was committed to its own programme. But toughest of all was its attempt to bargain with such a divided entity as the rich countries, who managed at every critical point to come up with at least three written points of view, each accompanied by reservations from nonconforming countries.

In the end, this caused the Third World to concentrate almost exclusively on getting agreement to a Common Fund. There were threats that the current North-South dialogue sponsored by OECD in Paris would be halted, that the developing world would set up its own Common Fund and operate it as a series of commodity cartels, that they would walk out of the Nairobi talks, if agreement was not reached. But they were confounded by the fragmentation of the views of the rich countries: every time they adopted a firmer line, the Western kaleidoscope revealed a completely new pattern of both excuses and reservations.

So what emerged from UNCTAD-4: who won and who lost? The answer, sadly – and perhaps ominously as the developing countries look back in anger to a wasted month in Nairobi – is that the Third

World lost. Like a gullible tourist being rooked in a game of 'Find the Lady' they were deceived by the speed of hand displayed by the wealthy world.

There are to be more talks about commodity agreements – but with no further commitment to a Common Fund. There will be another conference on debt – but the creditor countries will still insist on a case-by-case approach, with rescheduling as a possible answer rather than a moratorium or a general remission for the poorest countries. The aspirations of the Manila

Declaration are as far from achievement as ever. Even the harmless hope of President Kenyatta of Kenya that a 'Nairobi Declaration' might emerge as a by-product of the \$10m. the conference brought to his country's coffers was disappointed.

There is an exasperated cry that invariably goes up from white expatriates in Kenya whenever the tranquillity of their privileged lives is disturbed: 'Bloody Africa wins again!' It can be rephrased after UNCTAD-4: 'The bloody rich have won again!'

David Leitch

Taxing the Frenchman's Loyalty

Like one of those moustachioed City clerks H. G. Wells loved to imagine in a suddenly topsy-turvy environment, President Giscard finds himself this week the victim of a time-machine. To understand what has happened requires a (very considerable) effort of historical imagination – remembering the way things were in the early summer of 1974, no less. French society was then both more confident and audacious than it is now. In a sense there was no choice. The death of Georges Pompidou had written

finis to a 16-year chapter in French history dominated by the philosophy, and not less by the personality, of General de Gaulle. There had to be radical change, whether the French wanted it or not, and generally they did.

The question at issue was whether the new course should be navigated by a socialist president or, on the contrary, whether the French preferred to trust themselves to a different kind of reforming impulse. Hence Giscard's efforts to personify himself as the spirit of change. And hence the bronzed dynamic youthful Giscard – looking a good decade younger than he does now – quartering the length and breadth of France surrounded by cohorts of young enthusiasts wearing tee-shirts emblazoned with the slogan 'Giscard at the helm'. The trick, as we know, came off – if only by a whisker. But before even the statutory '100 days' had expired, let alone the seven-year stint the French had committed themselves to, the weather turned nasty.

By the beginning of 1975 circumstances had changed so profoundly – with unemployment reaching 1.4 million – that the ideas which had fuelled the election campaign were already starting to look like historical oddities. Yet a man, and particularly a president of France, must stand for something after all. It is unsatisfactory, to put it mildly, to be obliged to confess that the aspirations of the past mean nothing, and the most one can expect is to adapt to the exigencies of the present without being engulfed in the process. It is a reflex of this kind – one, it must be admitted, not without a certain despairing nobility – that has led President Giscard to adopt his current uncomfortable position somewhere near the centre of a political tornado.

The French Parliament, a body whose deliberations normally bore society at large to distraction, is by the same token enjoying an almost unprecedented attention. For a week or so the deputies have been preening themselves with self-importance. They have never had so many letters from constituents or received so many impassioned delegations.

The matter at issue, those NS readers who have entered into what might be called the French experience will have realised instantly, is naturally money. But the debate

Roger Woddiss

Prime Time

Sir Harold Wilson is to star in a £500,000 Yorkshire Television series on British Prime Ministers.

Bronowski inspiring us,
Kenneth Clark tiring us,
Wars Great and Second that stirred our hearts:
Now we've got shot of them,
Topping the lot of them,
Announcing Sir Harold in thirteen parts!

Premiers adorable,
Premiers deplorable,
Spanning three hundred and fifty years;
Walpole, the first of them,
Even the worst of them –
O what a feast for our eyes and ears!

Proud ones and priggish ones,
Tories and Whiggish ones,
Some of them asinine, some astute:
Harold will cover them,
Maybe discover them,
Such as the – what's-his-name? – Earl of Bute.

Proudly parading them,
Rarely degrading them,
Harold will show what has kept us free;
Hired as the host of it,
Making the most of it,
Learnedly earning his modest fee.

Leaders who lied to us,
Those who bowled wide to us,
Fearless and fallible, bent and straight:
Better than Dracula,
Wilson's Spectacular –
Not till next year? – we can hardly wait!

this week is not simply about common or garden *fric*. It is about the commodity in its more elevated and even mystical form, seen not simply as tattered notes, but rather in essence. The Parliament, spurned by the President, trapped in some vision of reformist zeal which so inspired him in the summer of '74, is set to debate the controversial question of how that state gets its hands on a percentage of the citizens' capital gains, and ultimately of their assets.

The area is so delicate that the text of the relevant Bill, which is known simply as 'Giscard's Law', has already been in preparation for two years. The fiscal complication of the Bill can be seen from the fact that already over 600 amendments of various kinds have been put down by different deputies, and how it will emerge at the end of three days' impassioned and very likely hysterical debate is anyone's guess.

The Communist Party, contrary to what might be expected – after all the Bill is an assault on capital, even if already in a much emasculated form – has come out flatly against the whole concept. They will begin the debate by trying to pass a motion calling for the whole thing to be put in cold storage.

Preliminary modifications in the Bill have already removed most of its sting. When the campaigning Giscard of long ago talked about the inequity of earned income being subject to (by British standards very low) taxes, while unearned income went scot free, it sounded like reform with a big R. Now no more than 300,000 French will be affected, and the slated provisions for them are scarcely Draconic. A father of two children, for instance, who sells a 'secondary residence' after ten years, will be liable to pay a tax of 2 per cent on the notional profit after numerous deductions, including one of in some cases as much as 20 per cent allowed for improvements and the cost of upkeep, plus other allowances for inflation. The projected levy on capital gains accruing from the sale of jewels, gold coins or ingots is only 4 per cent, which might seem modest enough.

Yet on all sides voices are raised in vituperation, and the debate will no doubt be more impassioned than any other of the Giscard era. There has perhaps been no more moving sight in recent French political life than the spectacle of the Communist hierarchy opposing the reform on the grounds that it will make under-privileged farmers liable to pay tax on their 'secondary residence'. And what, one might ask, about those who have still not managed to get their hands on a first residence?

The situation that has arisen is replete with ironies – already Giscard's dream of reform has been so modified that its financial and social implications are in fact slight. But psychologically it is hard to imagine a more explosive area. The idea of a fiscal law so ruthless that nothing is sacred – not even bricks and mortar, not even the sock of gold under the mattress – has shocked millions of Frenchmen more profoundly than any pornographic excesses. The only people in favour of the reforms have been those who incontrovertibly have nothing to lose. Yet even here the opinion polls have revealed certain eccentric bumps, the Communist Party's unexpected attitude being perhaps the most extreme. Something strange is going on. Why should the un-

employed, or the unhoused, pronounce themselves against a measure apparently designed if not actually to soak the rich, at least to dip their toes in the water? The explanation seems to be fantasy. For the moment, admittedly, one has nothing. But supposing times changed? Supposing one won the lottery? Supposing there turned out to be a crock of gold in the dustbin?

It is all distinctly reminiscent of General de Gaulle's mild and indeed almost inadvertent legislation designed to introduce death duties, which turned out to be one of the major factors in his 1969 referendum defeat. We are dealing here not with the dry actuarial considerations of the tax man

but with the heady material out of which Gallic dreams are spun. Not least President Giscard's own. For the legislation has scant fiscal logic to provide a scaffolding of Cartesian reason. Frankly, it is an irrelevance. Politically the benefits are as hard to capture as a taxi-driver's smile. Why then does he persist?

I suspect he sees himself on a platform somewhere in the south west, surrounded by tee-shirts and youthful evangelism, explaining how reform (with a big R) would lead us all fearlessly towards a Gallic New Jerusalem . . . But of course, that was in the summer of '74.

Paris

Barbara Castle

The Death of Child Benefit

The row over the Government's decision to postpone indefinitely the introduction of the Child Benefit Scheme is not a piece of petulance at the short-term constraints on public expenditure. It is the eruption of a growing anger at the stubborn masculine bias of British politics. It is an expression of despair at the failure of the Government's political will to create a more equal society.

An adequate system of family support is not one of the trimmings of social policy that we can regretfully dispense with if times get hard. It is a simple fact that without it there is no way of dealing with economic and sex inequality. Socialists have always instinctively known that these twin evils go hand in hand. The problem has been how to translate this knowledge into action in a political climate still dominated by the old inequalities.

The tragedy of the Government's retreat from the legislation on child benefits which I piloted through the Commons last year is that it comes at the moment when the trade union movement has been converted to the understanding that old-style collective bargaining will not change society. It must comprise social, as well as economic, aims. Jack Jones first pinpointed this fact when he started bargaining with the Government on behalf of pensioners as well as current paid-up members of the TGWU. It has taken time for him to realise that he must negotiate for his members' children, too. But he has realised it, and the irony of the situation in which the Labour Government now finds itself is that the General Council of the TUC will be going to its special congress on pay policy later this month armed with a document saying that the introduction of a child benefit scheme next year is part of its social contract with the Government at the very moment when the Government has proclaimed that such a step would be incompatible with its pay policy!

The appreciation of the need for a family support policy has grown slowly and thinly in the hard soil of trade union masculinity. The Beveridge Report, which gave us our welfare state, was ambivalent. On the one hand it built the post-war national insurance system on the concept of the wife's 'depen-

dence' on the family breadwinner. She and her children ought, therefore, to be content to depend on the vagaries of her husband's pay packet – and on his generosity. On the other hand Beveridge recommended a non-contributory family allowance of 8s a week, starting with the second child. A gesture had been made in recognition of the fact that pay packets are not linked to the needs of a family. They are an economic barometer, not a social one. So it is no accident that large families are usually the poorest ones. And it is no secret either that, even when the pay packet is reasonably adequate, the wife and mother seldom gets her fair share of it.

The post-war Labour Government's attitude was ambivalent, too. Eleanor Rathbone's campaign had had its effect and family allowances were part of Labour's policy. But the start in August 1946 was a modest one: 5s a week. And even the kindly Jim Griffiths, the then minister, could not entirely shake off traditional attitudes. The family allowance, he said, 'belonged' to the father, though it might be cashed by the father or the mother. It took a ferocious revolt by the women, led by Eleanor Rathbone and Edith Summerskill, to get the mother's right to the allowance entrenched in the new Act.

Since then the great drive to socialise provision for the family has run into the sands. For nearly 30 years increases in family allowances came sparsely and grudgingly and there was little inclination to extend the allowance to the first child. The Labour Government's increase in 1968 was the first for 12 years and mothers had to wait another seven years for their next increase in 1975 – also under a Labour Government. But big as the jump in family allowance seemed then – to £1.50 – it still fell far short of its 1968 purchasing power, and the allowance still started at the second child.

The reason for this time-lag was partly political. Family allowances were unpopular and politicians were afraid of them. But by the late 1960s, when the mood and demands of women had begun to change, the cost of across-the-board increases in family allowances had become prohibitive even though

they were taxable. The Labour Government's substantial increase in 1968 was made possible only by the introduction of 'claw back' – an additional tax device whereby the 10s increase was effectively wiped out for the standard rate taxpayer and only those on a reduced rate of income tax, or paying no tax at all, benefited. The Conservatives, elected in 1970 with a promise to increase family allowances, jibbed at the cost and fell back on the means-tested Family Income Supplement, with its stigma, low take-up and disincentive effects. Under this system the marginal rate of tax on the poor has risen to expropriation levels the rich in this country would never tolerate.

It was from this dilemma – the high cost of across-the-board increases on the one hand and the miseries of means-testing on the other – that the concept of a new type of child benefit was born. Its whole purpose was to concentrate the help government gives to the family through family allowances and child tax allowances in a single cash benefit for all children in the family, payable to the mother and untaxed. Only by the father giving up his tax reliefs was it possible to finance the mother's need properly. And only in this way was it possible to end the absurd anomaly whereby those who need the most help get the least because they are too poor to pay tax.

The concept, once grasped, is unanswerable. Labour first launched it with its 'child endowment' policy. The Tories then embedded it in their wider tax-credit scheme. Any belief that the women were not interested was soon dispelled by the uproar which was created by the mere hint that the Tories' new child credit might be payable through the father's pay packet as, logically, under a tax credit scheme, it should. Resolutions and letters of protest poured in. The women marched on Westminster. I myself presented a petition with 300,000 signatures to Parliament. The Select Committee on Tax Credits was forced into hasty unanimity that the child credit should be turned into a cash allowance to the mother, payable through the Post Office.

Nor was there ever any doubt about the effect that this decision would have on the father's take-home pay. The Select Committee discussed this exhaustively with the TUC. Vic Feather, then general secretary, kept his nerve and stoutly maintained that the child credit should be paid to the mother, despite the consequences. 'We will deliver what we agree to deliver. This is what the Congress will carry.' And it did. The switch from the pay packet to the mother's purse became trade union policy.

Nor has the evolution of pay policy in the past 18 months changed the trade union line. Even as late as last February, when the Chancellor's target of a 3-per-cent pay limit for the second round was already more than a twinkle in Denis Healey's eye, the commitment to introduce child benefit next year was still safely embedded in the White Paper on Public Expenditure. Provision for financing it, we were told, had been made in the contingency reserve of £800m. And the TUC was still going blithely ahead welcoming it.

What then has happened in the past few weeks to bring such a sudden reversal of government policy? It is not merely even primarily that the child benefit scheme has

fallen victim to the public expenditure restraints – after all, the Government is willing to spend £95m. on its alternative of giving a £1 family allowance to the first child. But the crucial new factor is that the father's child tax reliefs remain unchanged. It has not been so much a lack of money as a loss of will.

The facts emerge from a study of the arithmetic. Before the Budget the child tax allowance for a child under 11 (and only the under-11s were to be included in the scheme initially) stood at £240 a year, worth £2.35 per week, net of his tax on family allowance, to the wage earner. According to my advice (and the DHSS has become very coy about these matters) the rate of child benefit needed to ensure that the second and subsequent children received as much help as they do now through tax relief and family allowance was therefore £2.24 per week. In a two-child family the mother would have gained £4.48 in place of the family allowance of £1.50. The father would have lost £2.35 from his pay packet. The family as a whole would have gained a modest bonus from extension of the benefit to the first child.

Obviously a higher rate than the break-even one was desirable in order to make the whole process more palatable. It was about this that I was arguing with the Treasury when I was removed from office. It was just before this that the Chancellor announced his decision to increase the child tax allowance to £300 at the cost to the Exchequer of £300m. It seemed good news at first. A higher tax allowance automatically jacked up the level of child benefit. But it also jacked up the cost in public expenditure. In my innocence I did not see how the argument was developing.

The arithmetic now looked like this. The break-even rate became £2.64. The father

of two children stood to lose £3.16 from his pay packet. The mother's income would have risen to £5.28 – as against the £1.50 she now gets in family allowance. The overall rise in the family income would have been 62p. The cost would have been about £110m., still within the possible range of expenditure which had been visualised. At that price, the argument now ran, still within the upper limit of cost that had been estimated, the gain to the family – the sweetener for the switch – was not big enough to enable us to sell the loss of take-home pay to the wage-earner. And no doubt spending ministers, with their own designs on the contingency reserve, were only too ready to listen to the argument that a figure of £110m. was too high and that cheaper solutions could be found. Incidentally it is interesting to note that, under our conventions of government, the decision to raise child tax allowances without first examining the implications for the child benefit scheme was the prerogative of the Chancellor and not of the cabinet.

And so the Child Benefit Scheme has disappeared. In its place we have a pathetically small family allowance for the first child. The mother who stood to receive £5.28 for two children will now get £2.50 a week instead (on which, incidentally, her husband will pay £1.58 in tax). There will be no redistribution in favour of the poor. Meanwhile £300m. in tax reliefs has gone into the fathers' pay packets. Once again it is the mothers who will bear the worst brunt of the pay policy.

All we are left with is David Ennals's vague statement that the Government intend to bring in the scheme 'in time'. And there are some red faces in the TUC. Perhaps the trade unions will not take their discomfiture lying down. The women certainly won't.

Peter Wilby

Teaching's Vocational Victims

Three years ago Roger Netley had a reasonably well-paid, secure job, with some promotion prospects, at British Rail Engineering Ltd in Eastleigh, Hampshire. After spending two years studying for A-levels at night school and another year applying in vain for college of education places, he was eventually accepted for teacher training at Philippa Fawcett College, South London. Now, aged 27, on the eve of his final exams, he has applied unsuccessfully to more than a dozen local education authorities. Like some 10,000 other newly-qualified teachers this year he has almost given up hope of following his chosen profession.

Last week Mr Gerry Fowler, Minister of State of the Department of Education and Science, told a student deputation that his advice to newly qualified teachers was 'go and look for a non-teaching job, hope that you will be able to come into teaching later, but in the meantime get some experience elsewhere; it could be invaluable when you come to enter teaching'. To students like Roger Netley such advice

must appear fatuous, insensitive and ignorant.

So it must to other students I met at Philippa Fawcett: a former naval petty officer, who left school at 15 and later scraped GCE qualifications at night school to enter teacher training; a woman who used to be personal assistant to a company director and may now return to the same firm, but at a lower salary grade. At Philippa Fawcett, one of over 90 colleges where students have been holding protest occupations against the prospect of unemployment, fewer than 10 per cent of the primary teachers and barely 25 per cent of the secondary teachers due to qualify this year have jobs to go to. Last summer, nearly all the final-year students had jobs – a bitter irony for those school-leavers who delayed entry to college for a year in order to acquire the 'experience elsewhere' of which Mr Fowler talks so complacently.

The financial effect of this cold-blooded operation is to save the public purse some £30m. – less than 2 per cent of the

total teacher salary bill. Of course young teachers are no worse off (and, since they are bright and well qualified, probably better off) than the rest of the nation's unemployed. But, in their case, unemployment can be attributed, without the slightest reservation, to government action or inaction. It may be convenient for DES apologists to arraign whatever divine powers determine the birth-rate. But there is no immutable relationship between numbers of teachers and numbers of pupils. Between 1964 and 1974, 126,000 extra teachers were employed in schools. Only 77,000 of these were necessary to maintain pupil-teacher ratios at the 1964 level. The remainder were employed to improve the ratio.

Last year, the policy of improving school staffing standards by 10 per cent over a decade (laid down in the 1972 White Paper *Education: A Framework for Expansion*) was abandoned. In the interests of economy, the pupil-teacher ratio was to be frozen. That instantly disposed of 7,000 jobs. Other jobs entailed in the 1972 White Paper policy have disappeared with the virtual collapse of the nursery school expansion programme and with the reduction of the commitment to in-service training.

That is only half the story. For 1972 was the year when most of the students now leaving the training colleges were applying for courses. At the time, the shortage of teachers was so acute that thousands of London children were attending school only four days a week. Mrs Thatcher, then Education Secretary, launched her White Paper with a roll of drums. Though it was presented as an expansionist document, the policy appeared to err on the side of caution. Critics claimed that, on the basis of the information then publicly available, the White Paper's projections for newly-qualified teachers would probably not be enough to achieve the staffing standards it set for 1981. It seemed then that there was something very odd about the White Paper.

Now we know what it was. At least 18 months before the White Paper's publication, the DES was given statistics indicating that, unless recruitment to teacher training was cut, there would be unemployment by 1976. As far as teacher training and supply was concerned, the 1972 White Paper was not a framework for expansion at all. It was a framework for contraction though not, as it turned out, a sufficient contraction. Yet, despite repeated appeals from MPs and teachers' leaders for the statistical details on which the policy was based, neither the White Paper itself nor government statements concerning it gave more than a faint hint of future dangers of unemployment. Nor did the James Report on teacher training, published earlier in 1972, even though the committee had been briefed on statistical trends by the civil servants. The true picture trickled out in ministerial answers to parliamentary questions and was not published in full until July 1973.

Unemployment is not necessarily any more palatable when you are warned in advance that it is a possibility. But the students now leaving colleges of education were entitled to the full facts when they applied for their courses. They (and their advisers) could have incorporated, in the statisticians' jargon, 'a range of uncertainty'

into their decisions. At the time, however, even the DES itself appeared to acknowledge no uncertainty in its planning projections. Mr Norman St John-Stevas, then a DES minister, told the Commons in 1973 that 'no maximum or minimum estimates have been made of school population projected numbers'. The DES way, it seems, was to thrust a pin somewhere into the middle of the probabilities and to base all its policies and its publicity on this single hypothesis. With all the cheerful im-

perturbability of a gambler who is sure that *this* time he will break the bank. the Department staked all on an attempt to match dubious statistics of teachers' jobs against dubious statistics of pupil numbers. It cannot, in popular press parlance, be said to have got its sums wrong because it did not do any meaningful sums. For the Department's primitive planning methods, for its dishonesty, for its sheer irresponsibility, students like Roger Netley have had to pay with three wasted years.

Francis Roberts

Balancing Act in Italy

With just two weeks to go until Italy's most important general election since 1948, things are more confused than ever. The Christian Democrats insist that they won't have anything to do with the Communists, while the Communists insist with equal vigour that they must be included in the post-election government. The Socialists, sandwiched between the glowering giants, say they will join the Christian Democrats in government only if the Communists support them. Opinion polls show the two major parties more or less neck and neck, with up to 40 per cent of the electorate classified as 'don't know' (which is probably more accurately described as 'shan't tell': Italians regard questions about their voting intentions as an almost intolerable intrusion into their private life).

The key is in the hands of the Socialists. They are expected to gain between 12 and 15 per cent of the total vote, and they clearly hold the balance, in that neither of the two major parties can govern without them. It is therefore worth while to take a closer look at exactly what they have said since the start of the campaign. First of all, they have said they will refuse point-blank to join any government which is 'closed' to the Communists. This does not necessarily mean that it must have Communist ministers in the cabinet, but it does mean that the Communist Party must be included in government-forming negotiations and that it must be consulted when the government programme is drawn up.

The Socialist leader Francesco de Martino, now much more self-confident than a few months ago when his party was totally isolated on the political stage, says there are basically three different government coalitions of which he can envisage his party being a part. The formula which he personally favours (and which the Communists also prefer) is the so-called 'broad coalition of democratic forces' made up of all parties represented in Parliament with the exception of the neo-fascists. If that doesn't work, de Martino says the Socialists will seek a coalition of as many groups as are willing to join. Only as a last resort will his party form a Popular Front Administration consisting only of Communists and Socialists. Why the reluctance to form a pure Leftist government? De Martino gave the answer

when he met members of the foreign press corps in Rome the other day. 'If we are going to be suffocated, we would rather be suffocated while we are carrying out policies in which we believe,' he told us. Only as a forlorn afterthought did he add: 'Of course, I hope we shan't be suffocated.' The Communists are big, the Communists are strong, and the Communists are superbly organised. Few observers hold out much hope for a Socialist Party which finds itself sharing power only with the PCI.

The second major plank in the Socialists' electoral platform is the need to 'break the hegemony of the Christian Democrats'. As an election slogan, this has several things to be said for it. On the one hand, it reminds voters that the Christian Democrats have dominated every government for three decades: so if there's anything wrong with Italy today, as there plainly is, it must be their fault. On the other hand, it draws attention away from the Communists, who the Socialists fear could benefit from anti-Christian Democrat sentiment to such an extent that they sweep up all the 'protest' voters for themselves, leaving none for the Socialists.

And there is a third point in the slogan's favour. Just suppose that the result of the election leaves each party with its present level of support. The only possible government would be some form of DC PSI alliance. And if the Christian Democrats refuse outright to associate with the Communists, then how, in view of their pre-election insistence on Communist participation, can the Socialists accept a place in government? Answer: they demand, and are granted, one or more of the key ministries (Defence, Interior or Foreign Affairs) for a Socialist minister. They can then rightly claim at least to have 'broken the hegemony of the Christian Democrats'. Winning one of your major election demands is considerably better than winning none at all.

What does seem to be emerging from the campaign is the determination of all parties except the Socialists to have nothing to do with the Communists if they come to power. If there are Communists in the next government, therefore, that government will almost certainly be a straight Communist-Socialist coalition. Even Signor Ugo la

Malfa, the Republican Party leader tipped by many commentators (including this one in the NS three weeks ago) as a potential Prime Minister of a broad coalition Administration, has now gone out of his way to deny any such possibility.

Apart from the fact that he still stands by the vow he made last January when the government of which he was Deputy Premier collapsed ('I shall never again agree to be a government minister; it's an impossible job', la Malfa says), he fundamentally disagrees with the Communists on economic policy – he is a staunch advocate of a rigorous incomes policy – and is fearful of the international repercussions of a Communist presence in government.

What these repercussions could be no one knows for certain, but there does seem to be an attempt now to take the heat out of what might be termed the 'strategic question'. There was widespread relief here after the Nato foreign ministers' meeting broke up in Oslo two weeks ago with no public reference to Italy. At Dr Kissinger's final press conference, this relief was publicly expressed by the correspondent of the PCI newspaper *L'Unità*. When the Secretary of State gravely announced that he did not intend to interfere in the domestic affairs of an ally by commenting on the Italian situation, the *Unità* reporter commented audibly: 'Bravo, about time too.'

General Nino Pasti, a 67-year-old former Nato senior officer who at one time had access to the most secret of the alliance's nuclear secrets, is now standing for Parliament on the Communist Party ticket. He dismisses the 'problem' of allowing Communists access to Nato secrets by saying that during his two years as Deputy Supreme Allied Commander in Europe for Nuclear Affairs most of the 'sensitive' information which crossed his desk eventually turned up in the newspapers anyway.

But if the strategic question has been more or less neutralised from the Communists' point of view, there remains the charge of latent authoritarianism. Critics, particularly in certain sections of the press, are making considerable mileage out of a series of incidents early in the campaign when PCI activists clashed with members of the Radical Party, a small civil rights group. Not to put too fine a point on it, the Communists roughed up the Radicals in order to make sure that they would be the first party to register their candidates' names and thus ensure the best position on the voting forms for PCI candidates.

The Radicals had decided that this year, the first time they are presenting candidates in a parliamentary election, they would take the prized 'first column' position away from the Communists by being the first to arrive at the government offices to register their candidates (the voting forms are designed according to a first-come, first-served system; the first party to register is allocated the left-hand column, the second party gets the second column from the left, and so on). Some of them arrived several days in advance of the registration date, camping outside the offices like promenaders waiting outside the Albert Hall for the last night of the Proms. But when the PCI representatives turned up they were less than amused and, according to reliable eye-witness re-

ports, there were several incidents of out-and-out thuggery to make sure that the Communists got in first. Some people took it as a frightening example of what they fear could be in store for them if the Communists win the election.

Perhaps that's taking it too far. But the fact remains that the PCI is a tightly-disciplined party which suffers dissent gladly

neither within its own ranks nor outside them. When one looks at the Christian Democrats, with their internal party factions constantly at each other's throats, one can't help wondering if a bit of party discipline isn't a good thing. But the choice the Italian voter has to make is unenviable. I'm glad I don't have to vote on 20 June.

Rome

Christopher Huhne

The World of the Civil Service Unions

In the *Reader's Digest* of February, jostling for space with articles entitled 'Magical Malaysia' and 'America's Sultan of Smut', was a piece called 'The Marxist Battle for Britain'. It was written by Mrs Kate Losinska, then the president of Britain's largest civil service union, and it began:

With their massive and covert recruitment of public service employees – nearly 10 per cent of the active membership of my union are now supporters of the militant Left – Marxists are simply following a blueprint that helped bring control in Eastern Europe. For were local and central government paralysed, extremists could conceivably take over the whole country.

Mrs Losinska went on to allege Communist or Trotskyist conspiracies behind several recent disputes in the public sector. Warnings about other threatened areas of our national life accompanied the article – from Frank Chapple, Lord Robens and Brian Walden. On top of the *Reader's Digest*'s massive circulation, nearly 80,000 reprints of 'The Marxist Battle for Britain' were ordered.

One result of this scare-mongering was a wave of agitation within Mrs Losinska's union – the 215,000-strong Civil and Public Services Association. An eddy of litigation followed, concerning the whys and wherefores of the union's right to censure its president for 'behaviour detrimental to the interests of the Association'. The Court of Appeal stifled motions of censure in a decision which could have repercussions on the rights of other unions to criticise their elected representatives. In the end the conference at Margate last month made their disapproval plain by decisively ejecting Mrs Losinska, after one year, from the presidency; an honorific post which, she says, is usually held for three years, on the principle of 'Buggins's turn'.

An altogether more disturbing departure has been the indiscreet involvement of the Conservative Central Office. Central Office, and its 'trade union advisory committee', have sent lists of Tory-approved candidates standing for executive posts, to members of the CPSA and the Society of Civil and Public Servants. This was seen by both union conferences as unwarranted intrusion into their internal affairs. Each union maintains party political neutrality. The stance is particularly carefully cultivated in the more senior 'Society' (which represents grades from executive officers to assistant secre-

taries, whereas the CPSA is composed mainly of clerical, typing and machine grades). Circulation of lists contravenes the CPSA's rules, which ban organisations from activities 'which seek to influence the policies or electoral processes of the Association'.

Gerry Gillman, the general secretary of the Society, has protested vehemently. He points out that the omission of any candidate from the recommended list in the sloppily-worded early editions of the Tory letter implies extremism. This charge brings us full circle to the area on which the Losinska allegations rely for their impact. Since the Cold War, and the 1962 Radcliffe Commission, the sensitivity of the state apparatus to accusations of breaches in secrecy or security has been underlined.

The Society's conference in Folkestone a fortnight ago went to great lengths to reiterate, in motion after motion, what it sees as its apoliticism. Both the CPSA and the Society are affiliated to the TUC, but neither votes on party political issues. The unions' attitudes parallel the severe political restrictions which are a condition of employment in the civil service. Only 'industrial staff and minor and manipulative grades' are politically free: the other two security groups are restricted by seniority and the department in which they work. Nor do the security services have any inhibitions about enforcement: the consequences of a package tour to a Black Sea resort can be gruelling on return. Some are promoted, others passed over, without the subjects of screening being aware of 'evidence' against them, and without appeal. 'Not one of the candidates for election that Central Office backed is working in the Ministry of Defence,' says Mr Gillman. 'By inference, therefore, the MoD candidates must be immoderate and extreme. They could be perfectly innocent people who will now come under the scrutiny of the security forces because they are not on the Tory list. Central Office just haven't thought about the implications. They don't know how the security forces work.'

Politics are not the only consideration. Security men look for 'character defects', from snooping at the local off-licence to amassing evidence for sexual perversions. The Society of Civil and Public Servants is dealing with the case of a declared homosexual who claims that his career prospects have withered as a result of official attitudes

which ante-date Wolfenden. He says he is no blackmail risk, and therefore no risk to security, unless he is secretive and ashamed, which he is not.

In fact the very astringency of the screening process makes Mrs Losinska's allegations inherently improbable – unless, perhaps, she is suggesting that the security forces, too, have been 'infiltrated'. Apart from the Tories, the Losinska affair introduced other 'politically-motivated' groups. Yet her innuendos in the *Reader's Digest* have remained unsubstantiated. Michael Randolph, the editor, referred me to Aims for Freedom and Enterprise (Aims of Industry as was). No one there wanted to know. Nor did anyone at Truemid, apparently a semi-clandestine organisation, due to be launched on an unsuspecting public in a month's time. It purports to provide a service to 'moderates' in their unions by printing leaflets for those 'under pressure'. According to their Mr Ogier, Truemid is financed by individual contributions and company donations, and 'mirror-images the activities of the International Socialists'.

The International Socialists were running openly in the CPSA elections. Two were elected to the 26-member executive. But there has been no other evidence that the union's militancy has been other than economic. There was, indeed, considerable ill-feeling at the Margate conference that the law and party politics had been brought into the arena. Nor did any kind of militancy, political or economic, seem to be the prevailing sentiment.

Out of eight civil service unions, the Society and the CPSA represent the mainstream of administrative workers. As middle-class unions, career prospects and pensions play a greater part in their activities than manual unions, where direct bargaining over general pay levels takes precedence. Most intermediate civil servants see the chances of improving their standard of living not so much in pay increases at a given level, as through promotion. The union structure is curious, too. Rising from the ranks to become a permanent secretary (as at least one current Whitehall mandarin has done), the aspirant would have to change unions twice: from the CPSA to the Society, to the First Division Association (the body that caters for top officials). One observer at the CPSA's Margate conference suggested that the proceedings were like an extension of the NUS, so all-embracing was the feeling of youth. Over 30 per cent of branch officers are lost each year by promotions – in itself a major argument for the merger, proposed this year, between the Society and the CPSA. The latter have rejected further discussions on the scheme because, its opponents alleged, the Society is a 'bosses' union', and would entail negotiating pay and conditions with members of the same union. There might also be conflict over differentials.

The First Division Association is, in turn, regarded as a 'bosses' union by some of the Society's members, who tend to be post-O- and A-level LEA school entrants to the service. Criticisms were directed at the 'administration trainee' scheme, which allows for the recruitment and 'fast-streaming' of able graduates, about half of whom are ex-Oxbridge and from a narrow social

range. The proportion of promotions from the ranks to this officer-class has fallen, and talent is being wasted, say the Society. Leslie Christie, assistant secretary, claims, for example, that the academic intake lack necessary practical experience, at executive grade, before rapid promotion to policy-making: 'When Barbara Castle was at the DHSS, after the February 1974 election, she made a commitment at the end of March that all pensions, supplementary benefits and so on, would rise on 1 July. In the event most of the work was done by then, but only with massive overtime in the Department. It was a gross error of advice. One of the main reasons was that none of the policy-making staff had worked in a local office.'

There are thus ironies in the 'Marxist' ruction. These middle-class unions tend to have an ossifying effect on the service, a far cry from the strike-paralysis envisaged by Mrs Losinska. If criticism can be directed at the administrative unions it is that they represent the interests of their membership too effectively. (The Society must be one of the few TUC unions which negotiate private boarding school allowances, for children of staff working abroad.) The 1968 Fulton Report on the civil service tactfully indicated that the staff associations' interests were not always in the interests of an improved civil service. Essential to Fulton's recommendations was the proposal that the 'horizontal' and 'vertical' lines which separated the service into classes should be abolished. This would provide an open

structure, able to fill its posts from the most gifted. The 'horizontal' lines between executive officers and administrators have been removed, to the advantage of Society and CPSA members, who have increased their career opportunities. But the demarcation line between professional or technical staff and administrators ('generalists') remains, blocking the diagonal movement of members of the 102,000-strong Institution of Professional Civil Servants.

Except for the few 'open' posts in the administrative hierarchy, these specialists can only be promoted within their own pyramid. Roger Opie, among other critics, pointed out, at the time of Fulton, that this arrangement sets limits on professionalism and the availability of expertise at crucial junctures (at that time, and maybe since, running the risk of innumeracy in the Treasury). Further, all three unions are vigorously opposed to the injection of talented outsiders, at any level (the 'in-and-outers' of the American system). Cyril Cooper, the deputy general secretary of the IPCS, said that these men make little impact – the corollary presumably being that there ought to be more until they do. Aside from a leavening of political appointments at the very top, usually from the universities, institutions or public bodies, there is little free movement in and out of the service. Those who attempt it can be penalised on return by loss of grade. Yet some of our most distinguished civil servants have been 'irregulars'. Lloyd George and Churchill promoted outsiders during

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wartime, the acid test of need. Were the unions to have their way William Beveridge might never have been thought of. The civil service is, of course, a 'career service', and has been since the implementation of the Northcote-Trevelyan Report of 1854. The advantages are well known, but, critics say, must be measured against isolation and greater pressures to conformism. 'Wild men' with radical ideas have rarely been attracted.

Fulton also criticised the deference to seniority, whereby a candidate for promotion must have served a number of years (sometimes as many as five) before eligibility for the next rung, regardless of aptitude. Nearly ten years on, that aspect remains. Despite what the Fulton Report defined as 'protective, rigid attitudes hampering effective management' – especially through the joint negotiating committees, or Whitley Councils, at all levels – the unions have been skilful in protecting the pay, conditions and pensions of their members, compared to those in other sectors of the economy. Other trade unions have suspected unfair use of an insider position, rather like MPs voting themselves a pay rise (but more successful). Recently, starting with the momentous first industrial action of February 1973, it can be put down to militancy, comparable to that of the BMA, NUT, ASTMS, and other ascendant white-collar unions.

Contradictions, though, certainly exist (as when Mike McGrath, the IS's presidential candidate in the CPSA, called for total opposition to any redundancies. Even in the defence establishment?). Softer sensibilities had qualms on the closed shop. 'Comrade' and 'brother' are pronounced tongue in cheek. The Society voted for pay policy, but against public expenditure cuts, and for 'full cooperation between various departments in the civil service, in order that the abuse of the welfare system of this country may be reduced'. The CPSA went to a heated card-vote and finally passed a motion calling for two official tea-breaks a day, without loss of pay. Career prospects may be important, too. But is it sensible to act the unctuous dog-in-the-manger, to professional workers, or outsiders, and then to pretend, as the Society does, that such a restrictive policy heralds a better civil service? At present the unions do little to invalidate Sir Harold Wilson's pessimistic dictum that 'whoever is in office, the Whigs are in power'. Should the Government attempt, tardily, to push through more of Fulton's recommendations, it has a stick, in redundancies.

Cuts in manpower and services have been opposed in a well-argued submission to the House of Commons sub-committee, on expenditure. Most obvious would be the effect on unemployment: estimates range from Sir Douglas Allen's figure of 35,000 jobs, to the unions' fear for 80,000. Civil Service job losses are likely to fall disproportionately on women and the young, the two groups already most disadvantaged. Nor are these people, on present evidence, 'needed for the manufacturing sector'. The proposed cut-backs have not been related to the volume of work, which, at a time of high unemployment, is mushrooming, most of all at the Departments of Employment and Health and Social Security.

The suggested redundancies might, of course, just be government public relations bluster, a theory lent credence by the lack of any consultation between Government and unions. Ken Thomas, the general secretary of the CPSA, was retorting, just in case: the public will suffer, they won't like it, and civil servants will have to shoulder the blame, when, for example, driving licence applications are delayed. Neither Tories nor Labour, on past performance, like cutting central government manpower. Both do

like playing the numbers game. The ups and downs in numbers of civil servants have, in the past, largely been due to cosmetic operations: the 'hiving off' of the Civil Aviation Authority, or the separation of the Manpower Services Commission from the Department of Employment, in 1975, which 'cut' the civil service by 18,000 jobs. Maybe the unions can rely on their cosy insider set-up. That would be just one more inconsistency in the claimed new age of aggressive confrontation.

Phillip Whitehead

Portrait of a President

The toughest job in Portugal right now seems to be held by the young man who acts as interpreter for General Ramalho Eanes, Army Chief of Staff and almost everybody's favourite son as a candidate for the presidency in June. General Eanes has to be interpreted to a waiting world, where he is little known. Coming to the fore only after the abortive *putsch* of November 1975, and still little more than 40, he seems at the moment to have the fate of Portugal and its revolution in his hands. No one knows his intentions.

I have seen him erroneously described as tall, always hiding behind dark glasses, brooding, crop-headed, and much more. The reality is a surprise. Meeting him in Lisbon's Artillery Museum, after driving through streets still plastered with posters slapped on every wall like so many trading stamps, the hammer and sickle predominant, you are suddenly back in another Portugal. It is a world of authority and command – and precious little revolution. The General's personal style is the reverse of charismatic. Without much difficulty he manages to be the least conspicuous officer in the room, slipping to the edge of conversational groups dominated by such hard hats as Brigadier Veloso, the Oporto commander. Quiet, slightly built and bespectacled, he looks like Woody Allen attempting to play William the Silent. Whereas such glamorous if bogus figures as General Otello de Carvalho have always looked like actors in search of a role, the doubt here seems to be whether the role can possibly have found the actor.

When he gets on his feet to field questions (in this case from a delegation of West European politicians) the doubts disappear. The man knows his own mind. If the major parties want him to be President then he will be President, and on his own terms. The question is, what does that mean for the Portuguese revolution, in which the constitution sets Portugal on the path to socialism, and the parties of the Left have had a combined vote of more than 50 per cent in the recent election? Portugal wound up an empire and found a role, as a revolutionary society. Can it survive inflation, unemployment, the swelling throngs of the *retornados* and the vanishing throngs of tourists and real-estate speculators? The General has a view about all this. If I misinterpret what

he intends, then that may indicate why his interpreter was so edgy, using phrases that have not been much heard in Portugal since the revolution swept away the Spínolists.

A reorientation in Portugal was inevitable, Eanes says, with the disappearance of the colonies. But the Portuguese masses, so suddenly free, were unaware of the real situation of their country and asked for the unattainable, even if it meant anarchy. Lost production must be restored, and the army remodelled as a smaller professional body firmly anchored in Nato under a regime which could be seen to be non-communist. This is unsurprising to those who know their generals – except their Portuguese generals – and it was said in the heart of a quarter of Lisbon where the posters of 57 varieties of revolution have become almost a folk-art, and every street corner is an impromptu debate. One caught an echo of another soldier's verdict long ago, when William Napier snuffily remarked that no European capital suffers so much as Lisbon for want of a good police.

The army, General Eanes believes, must support, defend and participate in the creation of a Portuguese democracy. If he is elected President he will remain Chief of Staff also. Many politicians and his comrades on the Council of the Revolution thought that he was the best guarantor of the constitution, and thus he had become a candidate for the presidency. But the constitution enshrines a Portuguese road to socialism, and he is the endorsed candidate of the conservative CDS party, which does not recognise the constitution; how can he reconcile this? The General does not blink. He is also the candidate of the Socialists, and the Centrist PPD, who (in the days when they were opportunistically Left-leaning) endorsed the constitution. As for the CDS, well the mere fact that they had contested an election under the constitution had compromised them. They could be taken as giving it tacit recognition. If that was ever true it is not now.

What sort of President would he be? He explains that he wants the system to be semi-presidential, giving the head of state powers half way between the position in the US and the UK. 'He should have a role to play through the government, but not be chief executive. I would not want to be a

French president, but I won't spend my time cutting tapes and receiving garlands either.' If elected would he call on Mario Soares, as the leader of the largest party in the popular vote, to form a government? He had seemed to express support for Soares in an interview in *A Luta*. The general is delphic; if elected he will call on Soares to form a government 'unless, as more often than not here, the political situation has changed by then'.

Soares has pinned everything on making a relationship with Eanes work out. He has gone along with parties to the Right of him, and with what would I suppose be called the illegitimate Right in Portugal as well, in endorsing the General. He has abandoned Admiral de Azevedo, to whose sixth provisional government he owes a lot, although Azevedo will run for the presidency anyway. He has let the Communists put up their own man – the only civilian in the field, ex-General Otello now being the fourth candidate. A good many politicians of the Left, including Allende, have put their faith in generals at one time or another. The results are not encouraging. What does he say to the Left wing of his own party? The

revolution, brothers, has been postponed indefinitely, but when the going gets tough we can still make the world safe for social democracy. A minority Socialist government, which Soares wants to form, buttressed by a social programme which the Communists will not oppose, and a liberal humanitarian policy which the PPD and CDS will accept, is the aim.

But the going will be rough. Industrial action on the Left, and the mayhem caused by the *retornados* will give an impression of irresolution that could become a reality. When that happens Mario Soares will still need President Eanes. But will the General need Mario Soares and his government? Soares says airily that the military men are not needed in government now; if they want that kind of role it is back in the Council of the Revolution. But his conversation is sprinkled with wary references to the Latin American experience, to which the Portuguese feel much closer. All but three of those states are ruled by the wrong kind of general. Is there a right kind? Mario Soares, too, is going to have a precarious time interpreting General Eanes.

Lisbon

Ritchie Calder

Now Let's Modernise the Lords

The Raincoat Peers-list is obviously Harold Wilson's version of *après moi le déluge*. The tumbrils are rumbling. There are shouts of *à bas les nouveaux aristos*. That latter-day Mirabeau, A. J. P. Taylor, has scorned the House of Lords as 'a resting place for elderly politicians, who would otherwise have been put out to grass'. The *sans-culottes* of the Labour Party Executive have dismissed it as 'an out-dated institution inappropriate to a modern democratic system of government'.

As *soi-disant* Baron of Balmashannar (whose baronial tower is the local war memorial) I agree with the Executive. And I do so with a sense of personal grievance because, ten years ago, I accepted a life peerage on the understanding that I was going into the House to put through reforms which were declared party policy. I had never had titular ambitions.

But Harold Wilson's invitation to accept a life peerage was something different. Title apart, I was electing (self-electing, it is true) to become a parliamentary peer, as much committed to the day-to-day job and to the implementing of the party programme as any MP who had survived the hustings. And, in 1966, the reform of the House of Lords was on the agenda.

I have never believed in a unicameral system, and ten years in the second Chamber, with all its existing faults and absurdities, have convinced me absolutely. It is a question of either reforming or replacing the House of Lords. What makes the operation of the present system ludicrous is that there are 1,100 peers, the vast majority hereditary, who are entitled to speak and to vote. That

is reduced somewhat by the fact that if at the beginning of each parliamentary session peers do not personally 'accept the writ', they cannot sit. Deducting the Liberals, the cross-benchers and the 26 Lords Spiritual, the Tories, with their backwoodsmen, have a built-in majority of at least six to one. The Labour whips, on critical divisions and with a three-line whip, count it an achievement to keep that down to three to one. Every Tory amendment can therefore be taken as carried before it is called, and trooping into the lobbies is a mere ritual.

The Tories realise the absurdity. The Marquess of Salisbury, leader in the Lords during the Attlee Government, laid it down that the Lords must not defeat the intentions of the elected Commons. That is why the Lords do not divide on second reading, when a Bill, as an expression of the Commons intentions, first comes before it. The divisions take place on the detailed examination of the clauses in committee-of-the-full-House, the report stage and third reading. The amendments, including government second thoughts, are usually constructive, and acceptable, improvements and, where they are mischievous, the Commons can reject them. Thereafter the Lords can hold up the Bill for a year. But that would produce a constitutional crisis. That was threatened over Goodman's amendment to the Trade Union and Labour Relations Bill. The Tories backed away and, having commuted from academic duties in California at my own expense for that non-event, I decided that the sooner that sort of charade was ended the better.

In 1968 the reform Bill was produced. It

was not as Michael Foot contended a 'collusion between the two front benches'. It was, with all its faults, a creditable exercise in British common sense, no more hereditary peers were to be admitted. A two-tier system of voting and non-voting peers was to be created. The right to vote would be reserved to Lords of Parliament, numbering about 250, with no party having a built-in majority over the whole House and with the crossbenchers, mainly from the professions, being in effect the jury. The bishops were to be reduced from 26 to 16. There could have been a third tier: peers for the duration of a parliament. This would mean an interruption of at most five years. Apart from rejuvenating the Lords it could be a way of keeping on the back-burner really worth-while Commons types, until the next election. The Parliament (No 2) Bill had a 285-135 majority on second reading in the Commons. After 80 hours' debate in committee, which covered only the preamble and the first five clauses, the Prime Minister withdrew the Bill.

Of course the House of Lords is undemocratic in the sense of being unelected, and all the arguments at the time of the Bill about 'wise-patronage-by-agreement' to ensure the probity and competence of Lords of Parliament have now been discredited. That is grossly unfair to the many conspicuously able, incredibly knowledgeable, eloquent and dedicated men and women, who, unsalaried, without secretaries and without meaningful research help, fill the present Chamber four days a week, with long hours and no overtime. They get their fares paid from their place of domicile (in my case, Edinburgh) and £13.50 a day expenses, when present in the Chamber. Many have to maintain two homes, or live in bedsits, or bed-and-breakfast hotels, on that fixed allowance.

In spite of A. J. P. Taylor and with an endurance record of debating assemblies the world over, I can say that the House of Lords is still the best, and that 'collective wisdom' is very much displayed. Its proceedings may be poorly reported in the press but the Lords' *Hansard* is quarried for authoritative information by everyone concerned with the subjects and is compulsive reading for the higher civil service.

Above all there has to be a Chamber of Scrutiny, where, away from the pressures of Commons business and legislative expediency, a Bill can be given careful attention, not to modify but to enhance the intentions of the Commons. What is also forgotten is that the really radical Bills (as distinct from party-line legislation) since the war have started in the Lords: homosexuality, medical termination of pregnancy, divorce etc. And for the paradoxical reason that peers are unelected. Highly charged emotional issues, which would divide not only an MP's constituency but his local party, can be dispassionately (with some noises-off) argued in the Lords. The House acts as a lightning conductor to discharge the static. The unspeakable is discussed and gets spoken of in pubs and mothers' meetings. The irrational reduced to reason. Then MPs can take their courage in their hands, pick up the issues and introduce the Bills in the Commons. This is the reinforcement of democracy, not its denial.

London Diary

□ Education always comes off worst in a financial crisis. The Geddes axe of 1921 swung against the Burnham scale of teachers' pay almost before it had been established. In 1931 teachers' pay was cut by 15 per cent when everyone else in public service got away with 10 per cent and the police for obvious reasons with 5 per cent. Now the economy drive is directed against students who trained as teachers on the direct prompting of the Government. The students would be treated very differently if they were producing motor-cars or, for that matter, newspapers. Politicians talk about our duty to the younger generation. Underlying this talk is an obstinate conviction that education is a luxury and therefore the first thing to be sacrificed in a crisis. Children have to be taught to read and write. But nursery schools? Continuation classes? Away with such fancies. Local authorities love housing schemes and grandiose municipal buildings. These things show. Education does not. Also children have no votes and even those who concern themselves with so-called education issues are out for votes. In the old days the 'educationists' quarrelled over religious instruction, now over comprehensive or grammar schools. No one considers the plight of children pushed first one way, then the other. The fuss over comprehensives comes badly from those educated at public schools which are themselves a form of comprehensive. The test for admission to them is ability to pay, not ability to profit from the education provided.

□ If we spent less on armaments we could keep up our standards of education. Champions of defence have produced a curious answer. If we cut down on defence, we shall have to withdraw our army from Germany and then the Germans will have to increase their own. What is wrong with that? Nato started as much to keep an eye on the Germans as to check the Russians. But that was long ago. For years after the second world war I continued to believe that there would be another German bid for European supremacy and that we must take precautions against it. Events have proved me totally wrong. I tried to learn lessons from history, which is always a mistake. The Germans have changed their national character. They are no longer militaristic. There is no spirit of revenge in Germany or desire to reverse the verdict of the last war. Why should we continue to be suspicious of a peaceful Germany when there are no grounds for doing so? There is a clear corollary. The Germans, who are prosperous, should spend more on their own defence if they are worried about it. We, who are by no means prosperous, should spend nothing on it at all. So bring the troops home and expand the schools.

□ The wrangles over devolution recall to me the happy days of my youth when I was writing a history of the Austrian Empire with its many nationality problems. The parallels are not exact. There is no

privileged English minority in Scotland, as there was a German minority in, say, Bohemia, fighting to retain its privileges; and if there is such a minority in Wales it has not hitherto been vocal. Many concessions have been made. Scotland has its own church and its own system of law. The Welsh have their own churches and are content with English law or so it seems. Control of education? No one is going to argue about that, though the English government are trying to hold on to the Scotch universities. Use of the national language? The Welsh have this already to a great extent and can carry it further without complaint. The Scotch have no national language unless they invent one, as the Slovaks did. All these proposals evade the real question, which is the transfer of political power. As one writer said about the similar schemes Metternich devised, they are like offering pictures of still life to a hungry man. If the Scotch and Welsh are real nations (and I am not sure that the Scotch are) they will not be content until they can determine their international relations, and ultimately peace or war, for themselves. The moral of the history of the Austrian Empire is that a nationality, once aroused, will not rest until it achieves full political independence. If the two nations do not want to fight on our side in some future war, itself unimaginable, no constitutional provisions will make them do so. There are interesting times ahead.

□ Independence for Scotland and Wales will also be an emancipation for us. For one thing, we shall be able to use our own language unharassed by their complaints. The Welsh, having their own language, are no trouble about this. The Scotch however are intolerable. The English name for the inhabitants of the northern part of our island is Scotch and always has been. It was also the Scotch name for them until recently, used for instance by both Burns and Scott. Now some Scotchmen call themselves Scots and their affairs Scottish. They are entitled to do so. They are not entitled to dictate English forms to English writers. Yet every time I write Scotch I get a flood of indignant letters, mostly from Glasgow. Many Scotchmen repudiate this new fancy. Two Scotchmen of ancient family recently told me that Scots and Scottish were 'middle-class genteelisms' on a par with 'toilet'. Once rid of the Scotch we can also rescue English grammar before it is too late. No Scotchman knows that the first person singular of the English future indicative is 'I shall' and of the future conditional 'I should'. Thanks to the Scotch domination of the press both forms have almost disappeared. While on this subject, I express my distaste for the phrase, now universal, 'I should have thought that . . .' It only means, 'I think so and so but am too frightened to say so'. 'This is a rotten government' is more powerful than 'I should have thought that this was a rotten government'. It also happens to be true.

□ National pride is not confined to the Welsh and the Scotch. All nations have it, including occasionally the English. One tricky question has arisen. In the great days of Empire, English conquerors looted

all over the world. Now the liberated nations want the loot back. What are we to do? Are the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert to be dismembered? It is no good saying 'What we have we hold'. We are no longer Imperially powerful enough to do so. Looted works that are national symbols will, I think, have to be returned to their original owners. Apart from this, can we really assert a national claim to foreign works of art which rich men bought, often at knock-down prices, in our great days? If country of origin is decisive, most of the great works of art throughout Europe will have to go back to Italy, where they will be either stolen or locked away in galleries that are now usually closed. We had better stick to the old rule and say 'Money decides'. Since we can no longer afford our acquired treasures, they should go to those who can, whether it be the United States or Saudi Arabia. There will be one consolation. We can then pay more attention to the works of art produced by Englishmen, from the Bewcastle Cross to the paintings of Turner.

□ My house does not yet display a blue plaque saying that I lived there. But I have achieved an anonymous immortality. This is the story. There is now a canal-side walk from Lisson Grove to the Islington tunnel. The by-laws, prominently displayed, announce the closing times throughout the year. But when you arrive at a gate well before the advertised closing time you find it already closed. I expostulated about this. I received the explanation that the keepers wished to go home precisely at closing time and therefore locked up well beforehand so as to ensure that everyone would be out when the magic moment came. I asked, if that were the case, why not make the closing times earlier? Oh no, that would be against the by-laws. Why not change the by-laws? Too complicated and expensive. So now every gate displays the following notice: THIS GATE IS LOCKED HALF AN HOUR BEFORE CLOSING TIME FOR CLEARING THE TOW-PATH. For the first time in my life I have had an impact on public affairs. It is a pity the notice does not conclude: BY ORDER.

A. J. P. Taylor

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

□ On holidays Princess Anne says: 'We have never had one. A week at Balmoral or ten days at Sandringham is the nearest we get.' - *Evening Standard* (Bart Miles)

□ Lord Brockway (Lab.), said one of his guests from abroad had been refused entry because of an open-necked shirt. The rule was obsolete. Lord Shepherd, Leader of the House, agreed with Lord Segal (Lab.) that the committee should be asked to consider whether or not a supply of spare ties should be kept for emergencies. - *Daily Telegraph* (G. M. Moger)

□ Police Constable Ian Wallace told the magistrates: 'I was on mobile patrol when I observed a Ford Cortina travelling east. Protruding from the nearside window was the naked posterior of a man. It appeared to be causing offence to people on the northern pavement of King's Road.' - *News of the World* (Geoffrey O'Brien)

Caroline Seeborn

Girl Talk

I had lunch recently at the Bull & Bear Tavern in the Waldorf Astoria with a young man who was both a lobbyist for the water industry and a director of a non-profit water quality research organisation. (He carried two separate business cards. When I asked him if his two hats might not represent a conflict of interest, he looked rather surprised by my naïveté and assured me to the contrary.) Over our avocados stuffed with crabmeat we discussed various water-related matters for an article I was working on (the word 'related' attached to nouns is a very popular American form of speech at the moment, as in 'Watergate-related'), and, at the end, he gave me a present.

It was a card of the International Society of Girl Watchers, on which various ratings were enumerated with boxes beside them, ranging from Lovely to Adorable. The one my lunch companion had marked for me was Wow! On the back of the card were several closely written paragraphs about the organisation, including the statement, 'This Society is not a gag'. Along with the card came an adhesive-backed circular gold badge, for affixing to my person presumably, saying 'Watchable Award'.

Coming from the country that gave us Women's Lib, these items, I confess, gave me pause – and a severe test to my digestion. The young man, admittedly, was not a native of New York, but of Lombard, Illinois. But other ominous signs began to flicker across my (raised) consciousness. I recalled the fact that a book by Marabel Morgan entitled *The Total Woman*, an anti-feminist tract teaching women how to make themselves beautiful, sexy and submissive to their husbands, was a non-fiction best-seller last year – mainly outside metropolitan areas. I remembered the manslaughter verdict given last year to Dr Kenneth J. Edelin by a Boston jury for performing a (legal) abortion on a six-month pregnant woman. I noted the strength of the anti-abortion issue for presidential candidates – by which I mean they have all avoided the subject like the plague. I read the Census Bureau's newly issued statistical report that states that although employment for females has doubled since 1950, the average annual income for a full-time working man has risen more rapidly than it has for a female worker; and the gap is still huge – in 1974, the median income for a woman was \$6,957, which represents only 57 percent of the \$12,152 the typical American male took home last year.

But perhaps the most cruel blow of all to Women's Lib devotees is the continuing failure of states to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment; the most recent state being New York. *New York* failed to pass the local ERA proposals? The home of radical chic, Sappho is a Right-on Woman, the Womanschool, Gloria Steinem, The First Women's Bank? Impossible! Feminists throughout the city met in huddles over

coffee and danish, appalled at this betrayal of their sex. For it was soon discovered that Eve herself had done the dirty deed.

The anti-ERA campaigners are sly and insidious, of course. Everybody knows that. They go about saying that alimony, child support and child custody would be abolished if the ERA is passed. They say women would be eligible for military service. They argue that even going to the Ladies' Room would be a thing of the past. No wonder women in the suburbs clutched their alimony cheques, their children and their Soft Pink tissues to their bosoms and gave the big thumbs-down. Thirty-eight states must ratify the federal ERA by 1979, and only 34 so far have done so – with Tennessee and Nebraska having rescinded their earlier approval – so it looks very possible that a whole new generation of bras will have to be consigned to the fire.

All is not entirely lost, however. I attended a meeting this week of the UN

Conference on Human Settlements, at which films were shown of how various countries are grappling with the problems of over-population, poverty and food shortages. One film showed how some African villagers were being trained to farm their land more efficiently. 'And the women, too,' intoned the sound track, 'are playing their part, taking courses in homemaking . . .' The hisses that greeted this remark would have alarmed a settlement of cobras.

Another event worth noting is the new edition of Dr Spock's great American baby bible. It is now peppered with references to fathers making baby formulae and infants referred to as 'she' as well as 'he.' In the revised preface, Dr Spock says he has tried to eliminate sexist biases. In doing so, he has also eliminated his wife of 48 years, who has finally upped and left him on grounds of unequal credit – she claims she wrote much of the book herself. Women's Lib must answer for that: there's life in the Old Girl yet.

But if you go to Lombard, Illinois, don't be surprised if the young men engage you in girl-related talk and hand you a small card with a stick-on emblem in recognition of your 'attractive, well-groomed appearance'. At least there you will find a Ladies' Room to throw up in.

New York

First Person

Arthur Marshall

Heaven Knows

'I don't care what anybody says about God,' announced the late Godfrey Winn in one of those boyish bursts of confidence of his, 'he's always been awfully sweet to me.' And it cannot be denied that God really did Godfrey proud, allowing him to acquire considerable fame and fortune from a talent that could, like that daily pinch of Epsom Salts, comfortably sit on a sixpence. But is there a God? At Eastertide the BBC kindly discussed this problem at some length, airing the views of various eminent *penseurs*, and they themselves ending up, naturally, on the fence (they'd have been altogether clearer in their minds about it in Reith's day: or else). At one point diagrams appeared, and pointers, and it was 'therefore this' and 'therefore that', a sort of logical demonstration, and one wouldn't have thought that, against the merest whiff of logic, the idea of a kind or just God stood an earthly chance.

Still, it was sensible of the BBC to discuss the possibilities, and in a tactful manner. They were, on another occasion, less tactful. Easter Day. Glorious sunshine. Everywhere in churches lips were being moistened and lungs filled for *Jesus Christ is Risen Today*. The 8 a.m. news. Peep-peep-peep, and then what as item 1? An Easter greeting? A joyous carillon? An Archbish (paid to do such things) wishing us well? None of these pleasant subjects.

'The penalties for drunken driving are to be considerably increased.' So much for the Easter spirit.

How, one wonders, is Godfrey, a firm believer, faring? He took, as so many of us have done in our time, the mundane view of heaven – a permanent sunshiny bank holiday and picnics on a cloud with Mozart ('Who's for another sardine?'). Indeed, our only really recent news from the celestial regions comes via the musical Mrs Rosemary Brown, that lady who takes down scores from assorted 'dead' composers and is the chum of Liszt (so helpful to her in the Balham supermarket). Her psychic information is that everything up there is much the same as down here, only more so. Well, we shall, or shall not, see.

I suppose that, for those of us who do so, abandoning any idea of personal immortality constitutes one of life's milestones. Another memorable moment along the road is the sight of one's first corpse. This far from frightening experience came my way when I was 12. I was at a prep school on the Hampshire coast and every Sunday afternoon we were herded, in an untidy and reluctant crocodile, out for a four-mile walk, a master bringing up the rear to encourage stragglers. Our walks were always either Eastward Ho for Gosport or Westward Ho for Southampton. We never, for some reason, went Northward Ho, and

Southward Ho would have landed us in the Solent. On this particular occasion there was a pink uncertainty called Mr Lowley-Jones ('Slowly-Joe' to us) in charge. My friend Williamson and I had been instructed to lead the procession (it was Westward Ho) and, anxious to get back to our tuck-boxes and photographs of Dorothy Dickson, we set a brisk pace.

Rounding a corner, we saw lying on the shingle at the high tide mark, a dead body. The waves had obligingly washed it up and deposited it, in full view, just in time for our walk. Oooh, look! Despite shrieks of 'Boys, boys, come back!' from Mr Lowley-Jones, we broke ranks and rushed forward, not at all in ghoulish relish but simply out of interest. A woman. Straggly hair. A general puffiness. About 30. Fully clothed. Too bad that we had all written our Sunday letters home. This little happening could have made a striking paragraph sandwiched between the football results. Next week, perhaps.

With some difficulty we were dragged away from this unusual treat but not before one had become aware of the extraordinary *nothingness* of a dead body. It could have been anything, any person, any sex, just a sandy mound of emptiness, occasioning neither alarm nor sadness. And this feeling has remained with me, even when faced with the bodies of those one has loved. Nothing, so to speak, there. A stranger meets one. The spirit has either vanished for ever, or is elsewhere. My second corpse came ten years later. The agreeable Oundle housemaster, to whom I had been appointed house tutor, suddenly upped and died, aged 52. The funeral arrangements necessitated my seeing him. But he wasn't there. A quiet nothingness lay upon the bed.

As a boy at school in the delightful market town of Oundle (for real beauty of English countryside, hasten to this part of Northamptonshire), the last class of the morning, 12 to 1, was enlivened by the tolling of the 'passing bell'. Midday would boom forth from the very fine parish church clock and then, if a resident had died during the night, the age of the deceased would be rung out for all to hear and marvel at. A far from popular master was known to be 47. As we counted, and the number of years reached the forties, excitement mounted. But, alas, never any luck: on the bell went.

Who, one idly wondered as the lesson began, had 'gone'? We knew most residents of course by sight. It was not, we hoped, the cadaverous, spooky gentleman who had a walk reminiscent of that of a kangaroo when about to start some really serious hopping. He was dressed from head to foot in black, said 'Good afternoon' in sepulchral tones to all and sundry and, when not in the Methodist chapel, haunted the churchyard. There he had once been so inflamed by the charms of a canon's widow bending over a grave to freshen some nasturtiums, that he had attempted to press his suit (black) upon her. Her screams brought aid and her beau was speedily felled to the ground by the art master in full view of a class of boys diligently sketching the west doors of the church. That was a day and a half!

Or could it be somebody known to us as

'Ma Whoop', an engaging Gipsy-like, perambulator-pushing lady of advanced years who, to all questions or observations, merely answered with an extremely loud and wild 'Whooop', a sound irresistible to schoolboys. Oundle streets rang perpetually

with her whoops. Sadly, and in due course, she died (86) and we wondered what she had really been called. Inquiries were made. It was quite an ordinary name but it had been used by somebody else. Gladys Cooper.

Letters to the Editor

Ivory Towers in Education

Sir, Your correspondents (NS 28 May) are right to emphasise the dangers of segregating learning from doing. The main reason why content validity of curricula, as measured against job specification, is low is because evaluation of the courses is entrusted to those who teach them, and who, quite understandably, value most highly the abilities and skills that they themselves are good at demonstrating, and sensibly avoid areas outside their competence. The overall performance, the success of the graduate in the field, is of no immediate concern to the teacher, who is expected to reap almost exclusively an acceptable crop of exam successes. If some of his pupils or students achieve eminence or fame he basks in a certain faint glow of reflected glory, but we all know that it is unearned, unplanned and completely incidental to the educational system as at present administered.

My own experience as engineer/manager of electricity power supply undertakings in overseas territories over a period of several years yielded many examples of negative correlation between academic performance and practical usefulness among my various assistants and their staff, and prompted, on my return to teaching, a post-graduate study of the relevance of a particular scheme of selection and training of technicians to their job specification, comparing their performances in college and training centre with their performance in their work, as measured by promotion. My resources were too limited to obtain and study more than a small sample, and the value of the results are thereby diminished, but the low levels of significance that emerged from the correlations between promotion and intelligence scores, interview ratings and technical college course performance confirm that something needs to be done.

Writing, as I can, as both engineer and teacher, it seems obvious that teaching should never be a full-time job. No one is expected, or should be allowed, to attempt anything that he or she has not learnt, and how can one learn the full significance of anything without doing, living it? Laura Grimond is recently reported to claim that she fully understands the problems of the working class because her 'nanny' was a member of it and told her all about it. I have no doubt that Mrs Grimond's education left nothing to be desired by conventional standards, and her attitude is a typical reflection of it. The classic example is of Edward Heath becoming aware of London's traffic problem only when the police failed to clear a way for his car. He had 'known' it of course, in the significantly termed 'academic sense', but he did not understand and evaluate it until he was made to experience it. What an acceleration in reform there would be if all our legislators, judges, public servants, teachers and all were to spend one or two days a week experiencing the final outcome of their work, getting on the receiving end and relating their specialism to the system as a whole.

The Chinese experiment of doing just this seems to be the most promising to have emerged from any revolution, and it has sur-

vived, so far, the erosions of the individual's natural (?) tendency to stress the value of his own contribution to the community at the expense of others'. The idea of a continuing revolution seems to be an answer to the problem of how to avoid periodic eruptions of violence, of which the next may be the last, but it can work only if the monitoring and continuous reassessment is done by means of an effective instrument, that is by people who know by doing, who are prepared to seek out the discrepancies between theory and practice in the Popperian manner; and, seeing them, to look for ways to diminish them, not in the interests of any minority of the community, but for the community as a whole. Again, the Chinese point the way with their insistence on everyone taking a turn at sharing the chores, the low-caste jobs of producing and cleaning.

Laura Grimond's comment and Edward Heath's action are the products of an educational and social system which is pointing to a dark and dangerous blind alley. Ivan Illich and his group's 'de-schooling' may seem to throw out a vital part of the baby with the bath water, but some such radical reappraisal is becoming imperative for our survival, not just as a nation but as a race.

JOHN PUGSLEY

32 Field View
Caversham
Reading

Sir, As a university teacher in chemistry for many years and as an external examiner in three polytechnics over the last decade, I should like to take issue with Peter Wilby (NS 21 May) over the teaching of pure science at tertiary level. It is true that the numbers coming forward to study chemistry have halved since the late Sixties, but so have the job opportunities. Boys and girls are staying out of pure science and the associated technologies partly because they are afraid their training will not lead to interesting and rewarding work. As for the universities being out of touch with the needs of industry, we find that the refresher courses we run for practical industrial chemists are extremely popular; companies would hardly support such courses if they felt their men were not profiting from them.

RICHARD HESLOP

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Cheadle, Cheshire

Arthur Marshall's Mail

Sir, The line between the licence of humour and the discipline of truth is always difficult to define. The Post Office's back is broad, but we feel that Arthur Marshall in his two recent articles 'The Man of Letters' (NS 26 March) and 'Never on a Sunday' (NS 21 May) strayed so far across that line that justice would have been done had the articles carried the disclaimer that frequently accompanies works of fiction. But there was no such disclaimer, and as readers may well believe some of the grosser inaccuracies I must deal with them at face value.

'50 years ago all parcels arrived next day. It is a fact.' It is not: we were never that good as humans, nor was the transport system we use.

'No single postal code machine is working.' Untrue: machines are in daily use at 15 centres including such 'small villages' as London EC district, Sheffield and Southampton.

'The 6½p (mail) is specially sorted out to be specially delayed.' False: it is not handled at night or other peak hours, but this is in order to save costs and offer a cheaper service to those who don't need the faster speed.

'Plans for a new £13m. London HQ go merrily forward.' Wrong: we announced deferment of this scheme as part of our current economy drive on 5 August last year.

It is clear from the 21 May article that the author does not like a courteous attempt to draw his attention to mistatements he has chosen to make publicly. I believe that the NEW STATESMAN has a different approach.

I must also treat as fiction the story of the black postman who claimed that he could not read. I say this because anyone, man or woman, white or coloured, has to take an aptitude test before he is employed, and this ensures that he or she has a reasonable standard of literacy. Certainly no one who could not read could obtain a job as a postman.

P. H. YOUNG

Director, Public Relations

Central Headquarters

Post Office

23 Howland Street

London W1

Sir, It is a laugh for an American to read Arthur Marshall's complaints about the British postal service. While we in this town are fortunate in having an excellent rural post office, it is unhappily connected with the rest of the US Postal Service. The USPS says its new 13-cent rate for ordinary letters is fully justified. Three cents is for carrying the letter, the remaining 10 cents is for storage!

JAY NELSON TUCK

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Out of Sight Out of Mind

Sir, It is right for Donald Gould (NS 21 May) to stress the need for major improvements to long-stay psychiatric hospitals which continue to be the drabdest and most deprived section of the NHS. However, his proposals that Community Health Councils (CHCs) should have a 'prime duty' to ensure that such places are visited once or twice a week by 'citizens of goodwill' . . . from teenagers to retired admirals' is a somewhat pathetic and toothless response to the prevention of the ill treatment and complacency which has been reported at Ely, St Augustine's, Darlington and other hospitals.

It seems that Donald Gould goes along with the only too prevalent attitudes of many NHS officials - that CHCs be asked to spend much of their time organising 'good works' of dubious value. I wonder just how much relevant information would be picked up by the volunteers mustered to this difficult and unattractive task. No doubt it would be in the interests of many NHS officials if CHCs could be guided into spending their time thus; they would then, given their pitifully slender resources, certainly not have the opportunity to draw breath and realise how ill-informed the health authorities are trying to keep them. Hospital Advisory Service reports are not available to CHCs, and unfortunately there are many more examples where CHCs are unable to get hold of relevant statistics and studies.

Of course, CHCs have a vital role to play in ensuring that all parts of the NHS function

in the best interests of the patients. This can only be achieved if CHCs are allowed access to relevant statistics and reports as well as by their own careful observation. They must be recognised as competent to carry out their proper function of truly representing patients, rather than as a token gesture towards democracy in the NHS.

CAROLINE E. A. JOST

Chairman, Peterborough CHC

13 Norfolk Street

Peterborough

Let the Borrower Pay

Sir, What good news that a stalwart left-winger like A. J. P. Taylor should expose the foolishness of the Public Lending Right Bill (NS 28 May). In the old days A. P. Herbert argued manfully that the reader should pay something for the benefit of the author when borrowing a book from a public library. The librarians objected, so the authors' organisations weakly shifted ground and argued that the taxpayer should pay. Hence the present puny scheme. So long as PLR is financed out of taxes the return to the author will be mean. A. J. P. Taylor is surely right in saying that no one would grudge 5p to borrow a book - or perhaps an annual subscription of £2.

And this would help the librarians too. Right across the country the budgets of public libraries are being squeezed and their purchases slashed. This is inevitable in the lean years for public expenditure which we are now entering. If librarians want to see their libraries properly equipped and staffed they should start campaigning for the right to raise funds from their customers direct.

DOUGLAS HURD

House of Commons

Scientology and Secrecy

Sir, Pamela Hurwitz's letter (NS 21 May) betrays a slight distortion of reality which can be more damaging to truth than total withholding of information. My latest edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* does not say that Scientology is 'the fastest growing religion in the world'. It says that 'in the early 1970s it claimed an international membership of about 600,000'. Citing authority which merely reports something which a body has said about itself adds about as much as the puff 'as shown on TV' referring to a manufacturer's own advertisement. Perhaps I have missed another entry, but there is no cross-reference in my edition.

W. P. HIGMAN

12 Eynella Road

London SE22

Forward from Biggles

Sir, I fear that your correspondent Chris Jones, in his condemnation of the European multi-role combat aircraft (NS 21 May), has failed to advance his knowledge of air combat tactics beyond the Biggles stage. What is worse, his acquaintance with industrial economics is what one might expect of that gallant fighter ace.

Mr Jones claims that the Soviet Backfire B can outfly the British MRCA interceptor. Even if he is in possession of full performance figures for each aircraft - and this is improbable because one is so secret that its shape and size are mysteries and the other has not flown - he surely does not imagine that the 1980s fighter dives on its victim out of the sun, *Ace High*-style. Hasn't he heard of guided missiles? But of course Biggles never had those.

So the price of German and Italian MRCAs will go up if the British interceptor is cancelled. Subsidy? Not exactly, as Biggles used to correct the noble half-wit Bertie. When MRCA got on the road in 1970 Britain wanted 385 aircraft; 220 bombers and 165 fighters. Later we decided that we wanted to make our

fighters bigger and more powerful than the German and Italian aircraft. Then we wondered aloud whether we wanted those 165 fighters we had asked for in 1970, or whether we should buy American fighters instead.

If Britain had cancelled its fighters the cost of research, development and tooling for the entire programme - as distinct from the cost of the man-hours and the pounds of metal in each individual aircraft - would have had to be paid over 642 aircraft instead of 807. Ergo, each of those 642 aircraft would have cost more.

As a slightly bemused post-war Biggles once remarked: 'The whole of this air business bristles with difficulties.'

BILL SWEETMAN

25 Richmond Road

Basingstoke

Hants

Parthenogenesis

Sir, I see that Gillian Tindall (NS 21 May) accepts the old derivation of 'Pander' or 'Pantere' from *parthenos* (virgin). Adolf Deissmann, however, in his *Light from the Ancient East* pointed out that the Roman surname 'Panthera' occurs on inscriptions in Palestine; so it seems possible that the slander of which there may already be a hint in John VIII. 41 ('We are not born of fornication') picked on a real Roman soldier - perhaps one who had in some quite innocent way been associated with the Nazarene family. On the historical and literary evidence, when it is put together and weighed up, I find the early Christian account more plausible than any alternative so far suggested.

G. M. LEE

113 Ford End Road

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Is That So?

Sir, If Mr Benn sees fit to leave public life he will most certainly have his joiner's tools waiting at home, for his favourite pastime is wood-working. Mr Fenton (NS 21 May) must check his facts.

W. T. HEATH

8 Hawley Terrace

Hawley

Kent

The Life of a Princess

Sir, I am collecting material for a biography of Princess Stephanie Hohenloe-Waldenburg-Schillingfuerst (née Richter in Vienna), who was resident in London from 1932 to 1939. It would be of great help and interest if anyone who remembers her could let me have any recollections. Written or photographic material would be particularly welcome and of course would be returned immediately.

DIANA E. BIRCH

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Half a Hurrah?

Sir, 'No political education' in North Islington Labour Party? (Christopher Hitchens, 'Islington's Last Hurrah?', NS 21 May) - but there is. As you went to press, we held our first meeting on 'The Crisis in Industry'. On 25 June we will discuss 'Democracy within the Labour Party'. I am the newly elected political education officer for this party, and with my committee I am determined to hold monthly meetings, even if I have to talk to myself! So, maybe we can have 'Half a Hurrah for Islington'.

ALEX FARRELL

9 Pemberton Gardens

London N19

BOOKS & ARTS

Frank Kermode

Diana of the Crossroads

The Takeover by MURIEL SPARK Macmillan
£3.95

According to Suetonius, who perhaps exaggerated and in any case could not possibly tell all, Caligula was exceptionally grim news. First he describes him as an emperor, not all bad, capable even of calculated acts of generosity; then he describes him as a monster, a crazy sadist. Caligula was exceedingly avaricious, and enjoyed cheating people out of the title to their properties, selling the genuine imperial furniture, and so on. He liked to play with heaps of gold coin. He dressed up in rich embroidered cloaks, pretending to be a god or a goddess. He was full of envy, even for the lowest, which is why he hired a ruffian to go and kill the King of Nemi or priest of Diana, a runaway slave who traditionally acceded to the position by murdering his predecessor. Among his minor foibles was that he supposed the moon to be his mistress. Suetonius does not relate this fantasy to the construction by the emperor of two splendid barges or floating palaces on the lake at Nemi, where other emperors were content with villas. Handsome remnants of these barges were pulled out of the lake in 1895.

This last piece of information is most easily available in the opening pages of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which also describe the sanctuary and the cult of the goddess with some minuteness. There is a rather overwritten account of the behaviour of the priest, who lives in dread of his successor, another slave who will earn, by breaking a bough off the sacred tree, the right to assault and succeed him, 'the priest who slew the slayer/And shall himself be slain'. Frazer says that this is a milder form of a rite which required the sacrifice of strangers to Diana. At Nemi, as elsewhere, this goddess, though a huntress and fair, has little to do with chastity, being patroness of 'the wild life of nature' and human fertility; as Vesta she was, however, associated with virgins. Her festival, on 13 August, was converted after the fourth century into the Feast of the Assumption of the BVM, though it somehow got delayed till the 15th. In its original form the Dianic cult was widespread and unvirginal, as St Paul's complaints about Ephesus, and the lamentable trade in silver images there, sufficiently demonstrate. Frazer has much more to say, but there is space only to note his remarks on the obscure male deity Virbius, who might have been Hippolytus, and might have been a son of Hippolytus; he was the consort of Diana as Adonis was of Venus, and the first king of the sacred grove at Nemi.

At this point Frazer launches into the 'wider survey required to solve the problem of Nemi', and we know he meant wider, but

this will do for the moment. Mrs Spark, who can do anything, drops a whole chunk of Frazer almost *literatim* into the text of her new novel, as if, but only as if, to make all plain; and she adds some vague and rather misleading references to Suetonius. We may suppose if we choose that her title suggests some kind of Caligulan deposition of whoever has the job of caring for the *numen* of Nemi.

A very rich American woman has built or restored three villas on the lake. One of them is lent – though he would say it was given – to Hubert Mallindaine, who occupies it first with four pretty male secretaries, later with a sensible English female secretary whom he will not take to bed. Hubert claims that he descends from Diana and Caligula, a union that explains the construction of those barges. His name is said to derive from 'malign Diana'. He institutes a bogus cult of the goddess, encouraged by two terrible American Jesuits. Maggie, the rich lady, wants her house back, but Italian law prevents her getting it, and meanwhile Hubert is flogging her Louis XIV furniture and her Gauguin.

The story starts in 1973, and a heavy narrative voice randomly breaks in to tell us how important that date is. 'It was not in their minds at the time,' it omnisciently announces,

that this last quarter of the year they had entered, that of 1973, was in fact the beginning of something new in the world; a change in the meaning of property and money.

Of course they were worried, all except Hubert, by oil-inflation and the explosive rise in the crime rate; but they had no notion that there was occurring 'a complete mutation of our means of nourishment' – not merely a collapse of the capitalist system but 'such a sea-change in the nature of reality as could not have been envisaged by Karl Marx or Sigmund Freud. Such a mutation that what were assets were to be liabilities'. Wealth could no longer be protected. The period we are entering is labelled 'Dark Ages II', as Hubert intuits when he focuses his new cult on the historical moment when Diana and the assumed Virgin were most suggestively syncretised.

Maggie becomes a victim not of rampant Italian communism but of the crime wave; Hubert's rip-off is nothing to compare with the easy successes of jewel thieves or of the crooked international financier who makes off with her entire immense fortune. In *The Hothouse on the East River* somebody says, 'I'm real, and I've got the money to prove it.' Maggie stays real by going into crime herself to get her money back; but at the end she is dressed in flea-market

clothes and enjoying at least a symbolic pennilessness. So does Hubert, sitting in an empty house (for he has sold everything). Lawyers are crooks, art-historians are thieves, even the servant Lauro, who sleeps with Maggie and her daughter-in-law and her son and her husband, steals some of the coins she sent to propitiate the demonic Hubert. And Lauro achieves a very big takeover indeed by marrying the girl who owns the land at Nemi on which Maggie's villas stand, she having been deceived into thinking it papal property. 'Lauro', by the way, is an extremely unusual Christian name; perhaps he is all that is left of Frazer's tree-spirit, if we assume that the golden bough came from a laurel. Is he getting his own back?

But the takeover, we are allowed to think, is on a bigger scale even than that. Hubert's cult will, the Jesuits assisting, merge with that of the Charismatic Catholics besieging Rome and Castello Gandolfo, conveniently nearby. The truth makes one attempt at self-revelation, when, at the climax of Hubert's Dianic service, his assistant Pauline, whom he has slighted, reads out what St Paul said about Diana of Ephesus and her silversmiths; another English girl explains what all this means in terms of Hubert's operation; but the point is lost, Hubert's priestcraft being too much for them. The session turns into an orgy, with the straight English girl tearing off Hubert's robes, and midsummer fertility rites supervene.

There is a final image of Maggie with Hubert in the woods at Nemi, she in her rags, he having easily broken off, under a gibbous moon, the golden bough. He is only a Caligulan usurper of Virbius; Virbius may be Maggie's rather old-world husband, a marchese who, like Hippolytus, comes from the Veneto and is interested in horses, as well as her lover Lauro. Maggie usurps Diana; the lake is biologically dead, the alcoves, once full of votive offerings, are full of plastic junk.

Splendid as the mythological intrusions are – the coins, for example, which are carefully brought into proximity with sex and with death – it would be quite wrong to make this novel sound like a wanton mixture of mythology and millennial economics. Modern Italy affords plentiful instances of the takeover of property, of pictures, jewels, safety deposit boxes, title-deeds; everything from bagsnatching to kidnapping. So there is a lot of plot, and a great deal about the pleasures, the pains, the lingering courtesies, the juvenile enthusiasms, of the very rich. There are brittly conceived characters, pages of infallible dialogue. Sometimes it appears that Mrs Spark judges or places people by the degree to which they deviate from her own norm of cultivated English, and by this standard it would seem that Hubert is, as it were, one of her own sort, whereas the American ladies are not, nor the Jesuits. For, as someone said in *The Hothouse by the East River*, 'It is so difficult to follow people's meanings when they learn the words from Webster.' In fact Hubert, with his elegant pettishness, his exploitation of the vague border country where true religion marches with its diabolic neighbours, his spite-sharpened perceptiveness and his power to

abuse even those for whom he might feel some affection, is a demonic version of the novelist. *The Takeover* is a very funny, nerve-wracking book, like most of the others in this now pretty majestic oeuvre, including no doubt *The Very Fine Clock*, a work which now mysteriously appears under 'By the Same Author' between *The Public Image* and *The Driver's Seat*, and to which one looks back with much expectation of painful enjoyment.

Derek Mahon

Pagan Place

Mother Ireland by EDNA O'BRIEN *Weidenfeld*
£3.95

Stephen Dedalus called Ireland 'an old sow that eats her farrow'; and so, by implication, does Edna O'Brien in this brief autobiography, more essay than book: 144 pages, of which 48 are given over to photographs, very good ones, by Fergus Bourke. My own favourites are the portrait of Finbar Nolan, the faith healer ('a combination of Georgie Best and the Giotto painting of St John the Baptist'), and that of a dirt road at thunderous twilight, ribboning palely into empty distance between bog and bog.

This road is one of Edna O'Brien's recurring symbols. It's a road that leads nowhere, or to the end of the world. Little traffic passes that way. It's a road such as the Irish Tourist Board recommends to space-starved English motorists, but which fails to recommend itself, in any practical sense, to what used to be called 'the native Irish', except in so far as it might lead to Shannon Airport or Dun Laoghaire Pier. This, at any rate, was the conventional wisdom in the not-so-distant past with which Edna O'Brien is concerned, and in which a certain kind of Irish novel (of which Miss O'Brien was herself the best-known practitioner) always ended with the protagonist 'taking the boat'. Now things are different, Dublin a bustling if less beautiful European capital, full of men with slimline briefcases, the briefcases full of documents instead of sandwiches and shaving kit.

To this extent, then, *Mother Ireland* is a bit dated, though not as dated as the apologists for the investment-hungry New Ireland would like to think. The tinker woman in Fergus Bourke's photograph is our contemporary, although her little boy has a pair of Wellington boots on him, whereas ten years ago he might very well have gone barefoot. 'Men who were courting,' we are told,

used to wait at the roadside and let out their low signalling whistles. Courtships were desperate affairs conducted in bogs and mires, eked out in the secrecy of wet hedges.

Is this still true? In some places, maybe. Certainly the idea has an honoured place in Irish literary iconography, along with hedge schools and rapparees. So, too, have the crazed policemen in the story of the superintendent visiting a Garda station enlivened

by a recent seizure of poteen:

In the kitchen I found Garda Burke. He caught me by the uniform and refused to let me go . . . I found the sergeant urinating into the street . . . He started to argue with me on the footpath, his private part exposed, each syllable punctuated by bursts of urine . . .

A gross libel, of course, on a fine body of men.

The best things in this rather insubstantial book are the banal yet magical moments of childhood, 'the passionate transitory' in Patrick Kavanagh's phrase: the raincoats piled on hooks in the school cloakroom, 'coats slung on top of one another all threatening to fall off'; and the glacé cherry on a shop cake 'as precious as a jewel', though there were blackberries glistening in the hedges. Miss O'Brien writes as arrestingly as ever (the prayers she learned 'had the glandular desperation ascribed to human love') and tells some splendid stories, as of the rudimentary school dancing lessons, without musical accompaniment, when everybody hummed. Some girls spoke 'One two three four five six seven, all good children go to heaven, when they die their sins are forgiven, one two three four five six seven'.

And there are flashes of poignancy that recall her early novels, as when she waits hopelessly on O'Connell Bridge for a fellow who jilted her, while 'the neon with a different gaudy light for each digit announced and re-announced the word BOVRIL'. But there is something premature and factitious about the whole exercise. It might have been a good idea to wait a while longer before giving us the really considered autobiography which may yet be her masterpiece.

Bernard Crick

United We Fall

Revolution by JEAN BAECHLER *Basil Blackwell* £5.50

The Origins of Capitalism by JEAN BAECHLER *Basil Blackwell* £4.75

Most studies of revolutions are dominated by a Marxist paradigm and hence are, at the best, random historical illustrations of an immaculate type, always redefined rather than exposed to any risk of empirical refutation; or, at the worst and most often, they are merely studies of why something that never was has not developed as theoretically it should. The common fault is that they proceed by definition, making 'Revolution' stand for fundamental changes in the structure and ownership of the means of production, the transformation of values, qualitative changes in social relationships or complete replacement of the hegemony of one class by another.

But did these things ever come to pass or are they ever likely to be fulfilled completely? No: such a commonsense point is denounced as vulgar positivism. These

mighty concepts are tenaciously held either as universal measuring rods or else as un-touchable logical constructs.

Not the least of Jean Baechler's original and provocative virtues is that he breaks from this weary round. And these translations of two short and lucid books show that it is simply not true that *all* political and social thought in Paris is Marxist, Existentialist or else Thomist. He has an analytical, systematic yet sceptical mind, though one not afraid (unlike our political philosophers) to range widely through history and historical and comparative sociology. He sees *Les Phénomènes révolutionnaires* (the French title conveys his meaning better than the English) as all the possible ways of challenging an established social order. Marxist definitions he sees as both narrow and as teleological. He loftily remarks that he will ignore entirely 'anything covered by the term "The Revolution"'. He knows only revolutions, not Revolution – much as Burke once cried, doomed to perpetual and often deliberate misunderstanding, 'I know not the Rights of Man, only the rights of Englishmen' – or of anyone else, Burke meant, in time, place and circumstance.

There are many ways of challenging an established order. Logically, anchoritism, hippiedom (that is, alternative or counter-cultures), suicide, madness and crime can be challenges as interesting as overtly political revolt. He gives the trendy absorptions of the Left Bank their speculative due – which can be considerable – but puts



H. Montgomery Hyde

"Rich in detail, will surely be the definitive life".

Daily Mail

"Superlatively accomplished . . . Wilde comes through to touch our hearts and minds."

The Times

EYRE METHUEN £6.95

them into proportion and relationships, clearly and briefly.

Baechler argues that no area of life in society

actualises a single possibility . . . every social institution is a choice and every choice is arbitrary. It follows that all institutions are a form of restraint and may be challenged.

Morally, he does not even stop to consider the absurd view that all forms of restraint are bad. Empirically he points out that the odds are nearly always overwhelmingly against the challengers. Established regimes can normally defend themselves or adapt (and why not?) to all challenges except those of war or other events beyond internal control. Therefore 'the decisive factor in the theory of revolution . . . seems to me to be the analysis of the fragility of political systems'.

Here I am a little disappointed that the author does not refer to my well-known iron law of revolutions: 'that revolutions take place because regimes break down'; but I feel no jealousy, only aghast admiration at how swiftly, wide-rangingly and occasionally recklessly he hammers home the point that to study revolutions is to study what makes governments strong or weak, adaptive or rigid, how they maintain or relinquish authority and obedience. His scorn for sociological and economic explanations

makes me nervous (of colleagues). But I think that he moves in the right direction and certainly he is neither coward nor flincher: 'revolutionaries never create a revolutionary situation', he mildly remarks, though contextually (as they say) the remark could be a provocation to violence.

Those who dismiss 'pluralism' as only descriptive of a dilemma or defensive of reaction – and not as the most powerful humanistic political theory and doctrine – have a positive duty to read this book. The diversity of values in the West leads, Baechler argues, to a continuous political instability; but that this is the very condition of liberty and both cultural and technical innovation. His *The Origins of Capitalism* sees this same cultural pluralism as the condition of that privileged position given to economic efficiency which to him, rather than precise forms of ownership, is the hallmark of capitalism. He makes the concept of capitalism far from sacrosanct; but there is still a lusty baby not to be thrown out with all the dirty bath water. As he so rightly points out, neither the real world nor any possible ideal world is a thing of wholes and totalities – unlike Marxist theory and *laissez faire* antitheses. Those who say that we need unified values again in order to resist revolution are as foolish as those who think that we can find them through revolution – 'nostalgia for despotism', he remarks of them both.

dormant that they seemed new; Freud, who cast doubts on the freedom of all modes of thought from their subconscious determinants; and Hitler, who in prostituting Nietzsche's critical violence and attempting to destroy the race whence Marx and Freud had sprung, left modern Germany with a sense of its own potential depths that has proved almost too bitter for the printed page to cope with.

Given the political urgency of these last decades of German experience, and their exemplary relevance to other cultures, it's perhaps not surprising that German literature of those eras preceding what one might term 'social consciousness' has fallen rather abruptly into the background. Even among specialist academics of a relatively neutral politics, there has been a natural tendency to look for a lifeline of reason, an honourable tradition of concern in the writing of the emergent German nation – beginning, I suppose, with the playwright Lessing and *Emilia Galotti*, his prototype *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* or 'domestic tragedy' (a much-disputed definition). The Garlands themselves have contributed to this tendency, with Professor Garland's *Lessing: The Founder of Modern German Literature* and his wife's study of the prose tragedies of Friedrich Hebbel, among which are numbered the best-known examples of *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* produced in the mid-19th century.

If this movement towards a psychologically-based consideration of social suffering has a standard-bearer, it must be Georg Büchner, the author of *Woyzeck* and *Dantons Tod*, who always commands, in books of this kind, an entry out of all apparent proportion to his tiny *oeuvre*. Büchner died of typhoid in 1837 at the age of 24, by which time he had produced a small yet amazingly prescient body of work whose fragmentariness, it has been cogently argued, is not the accidental legacy of an early death but a prefiguration of all that is episodic and staccato in the *Angst* of modern art. The short story 'Lenz', in particular, rivals in its 'passionate alienation', so to speak, anything that the more elegant neurosis of Kafka could bring forth in our own century.

It is only in our own day, and thanks to the grisly recent history of Europe, that the tradition of desperate and occasionally

Russell Davies

Teutorials

The Oxford Companion to German Literature edited by HENRY and MARY GARLAND
£10.00

Coming on to the market a few months after Oxford's manual of Sports and Games, and a couple of weeks before the equivalent tome on Film, the new Companion to German Literature takes us back to the sober origins of the series. Beyond, in fact, to an *Urzeit* before Harvey's friendly English Companion, a time when scholarship looked fiercely straight ahead and the reader made his own amusement. Henry and Mary Garland faced a vast mountain-range of intractable material, and they have reduced it, as indeed they had to, to a merely gigantic field of molehills. Their preface strikes an unusually clear note of exhaustion: 'Lastly, we cannot forbear to add how much the sense of mutual assistance and reliable collaboration has served to keep each of us going to the end of a very long road.' It is not often you see collaborators flopping so gratefully into each other's arms.

But German literature *is* a long road, and as far as English readers are concerned the way back along it has tended to look uninviting of late. It is quite possible nowadays, I should think, to know Goethe only for *Faust* and Schiller for *An die Freude* and still be taken for a well-read individual.

The trouble has not been so much the wars that have temporarily driven us to reject the German tradition out of hand, but the different barriers thrown up against the Germanic past by a few world-influencing men whose 'relevance' has come to blot out the past: outstandingly Marx, to whose ideology the literature of half the ex-Vaterland is subject; Nietzsche, whose work reawoke ecstatic modes of thought so long

Edward Lowbury

Old Age of a Clown

In a way, it's more pathetic than the dotage
Of scholar, poet, statesman,
For this one never seemed to age –
Or, for that matter, to grow up;

A permanent child, he kept us laughing through
Five decades; when we walked, he ran,
Or hopped, or capered – yet he knew
Some day such larks would have to stop.

Translated at one stroke from infancy
To old age, the jester seems
To have by-passed maturity,
And staggers, puzzled, through his dreams.

nihilistic honesty which Büchner's work predicted has looked like coming to its proper fulfilment. There seems to be a general fear of what might be revealed beneath when the last vestiges of a long romantic tradition are stripped away – hence Böll's fidgeting about with layers of 'evidence' – and sometimes, a sheerly paranoid, pamphleteering manner has resulted, as in the hecklesome plays of Hochhuth. But already there are signs, in the work of, say, Peter Handke, that the German avant-garde, having the more throbbing hangover to react against, may well come up with a more invigorating remedy for the European morning-after than any of its colleagues.

Generally patient with the moderns, except the imprecise ones (*Steppenwolf*, 'an exceptionally bizarre product of Hesse's psycho-analytical preoccupations', is resolved when 'Harry visits the Magic Theatre, a surrealist world, in which he murders a Hermine who is not a Hermine with a knife which is not a knife'), the Garlands are of course massively respectful of the great old tradition; and it takes a work of this scale to make one realise how rich Germany was in medieval lyricists, the *Minnesänger*; how long the tradition of the 'spiritual quest' survived and dominated, after its initiation by Wolfram von Eschenbach in *Parzival* (it was still going strong in *Steppenwolf*, for example); and, alas, how deficient the tradition is in humour rich enough to survive translation. One only has to look over the border to Czechoslovakia to find, in *Schweyk*, the kind of exportable comic epic Germany has never engendered, unless one counts *Münchhausen*, which I have never felt to be a threat to the wellbeing of even the most splittable sides. The Swiss come to the rescue with Heidi and the Robinson family for the children – and I must confess I didn't know that Bambi was an animal of German origin. Ah, but his creator, Felix Salten (alias Siegmund Salzmann) was born in Budapest, and died in Zurich.

In all reference books, there are unclassifiable oddments that stick in the mind, and I find that the near-indefatigable Garlands have encumbered me with several strangely haunting ones. Viz: Blücher, the Prussian general, was 'proverbial for the startling misspellings in his letters'; Schopenhauer read *The Times* daily for at least 50 years; Carmen Sylva, otherwise Elisabeth, Queen of Romania, was born at Schloss Monrepose. All sixth-formers, titillated already by the juicy Saxon-ness of German vocabulary, will wish to read 'Die Halbe Birne' ('the half-pear'), 'an obscene anecdote in verse written in the 13th century'. Who the Fuggers were, and what they did with a *Schwank*, the lower school can discuss among themselves.

Among this week's contributors:

DAVID LODGE has just been awarded the Hawthornden Prize for his latest novel, *Changing Places*.

FRANK KERMODE is King Edward VII Professor of English at the University of Cambridge.

BERNARD CRICK's books include *The Reform of Parliament* (1964) and *Political Theory and Practice* (1972).

David Lodge

The Convergence of the Twain

An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress
by THOMAS HARDY edited and with an introduction by Terry Coleman *Hutchinson* £2.95

An Indiscretion in the Life of an Heiress, originally published as a serial story in 1878 and now made generally available in Britain in book form for the first time, is the most substantial relic we have of Thomas Hardy's very first work of fiction. This was a novel entitled *The Poor Man and the Lady: a story with no plot*, which he completed in 1868, and submitted first to Macmillan, who had it read by John Morley, and subsequently to Chapman, who had it read by George Meredith. The consensus of this formidable group of judges was that the manuscript showed promise of a quite unusual order, but that it was too flawed and too controversial to launch the author successfully upon a literary career. They agreed in finding some of the incidents far-fetched and the anti-establishment tone of the book too extreme.

The first of these strictures was one that Hardy never completely avoided – perhaps never cared to avoid, for he was always willing to risk implausibility for the sake of a striking effect. The second criticism may cause us more surprise, for one does not think of Hardy as a politically radical novelist: even in *Tess* and *Jude* his sympathy for the oppressed and underprivileged is

framed by a stoic acceptance of fate. *The Poor Man and the Lady*, however, was evidently a thoroughly engaged piece of work. Hardy himself described it, with the affectionate irony of an old man looking back on his youth, as

a sweeping dramatic satire of the squirearchy and nobility, London society, the vulgarity of the middle class, modern Christianity, church-restoration and political and domestic morals in general... the tendency of the writing being socialistic, not to say revolutionary.

Meredith advised Hardy to write another novel with less polemic and more plot, which he duly produced in *Desperate Remedies* (1870). Some scenes of rustic Christmas festivities in *The Poor Man and the Lady* which Macmillan and the others had particularly admired were incorporated into *Under The Greenwood Tree* (1872) and other ideas and incidents from the first novel are to be found scattered throughout Hardy's *oeuvre*. In 1878 he carved out of it a short, simple love-story and published it as a serial in the *New Quarterly Magazine*. The original manuscript was destroyed by Hardy and our only sources of information about it are Macmillan's encouraging letter of rejection and a memoir of Edmund Gosse's reporting Hardy's description of it in later life. That the hero of *The Poor Man and the Lady* was an architect, like the young Hardy

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TRIPARTITE WORLD EMPLOYMENT CONFERENCE (4 - 17 June)

EMPLOYMENT, GROWTH AND BASIC NEEDS: A ONE-WORLD PROBLEM

Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Office

vi + 177 pages. ISBN92.2.101510.6

£3.20; Swiss Fr. 20.

More than 700 million people throughout the world live in acute poverty; at least 460 million suffer from severe malnutrition; in the developing countries alone; nearly 300 million are unemployed or underemployed.

Under the basic needs approach to development proposed by the Director-General of the ILO to combat these evils, each country would aim to attain certain maximum standards of living by the year 2000.

How this aim might be achieved through national employment strategies and international strategies taking account of trade-adjustment assistance, international manpower movements, technological choice and innovation for developing countries and the role of multinational enterprises is the subject of various chapters of the report which ends by singling out the key policy issues on which the Conference might focus its discussion.

himself, and the narrator of the story (a mode Hardy never used in subsequent novels) suggests that he destroyed the manuscript because he considered it biographically too revealing, or misleading.

The serial story, here reprinted with a useful introduction by Terry Coleman, is not a neglected masterpiece, but it has considerable charm and several touches of Hardy's distinctive genius. The plot is very simple: Egbert Mayne, a gifted but poor young man, falls imprudently in love with Geraldine, the beautiful daughter of the local squire, and she with him. He goes to London to make his fortune, but as the years pass her loyalty falters under the pressures of family and Society and she almost gives herself in loveless marriage to an aristocratic suitor. After a dramatic meeting on the eve of the wedding, the couple elope and marry, but the strain and shock of attempting a reconciliation with her stern father prove too much for Geraldine, and she has a seizure that proves fatal. Vestiges of the *ur-novel* may be discerned in the scene where Egbert, acting as schoolmaster, is guiltily struck by the contrast between the hard, deprived lives of his little charges, going home in the rain, and the pampered life-style of his mistress; and another where Geraldine's ineptitude in handling the tools at a foundation-stone ceremony neatly symbolises her ignorance of labour. But there is no trace of the scene in *The Poor Man and the Lady* where Geraldine's class loyalties were offended by hearing her lover make a radical speech in Trafalgar Square, and the motivation of the characters is for the most part romantic and sentimental.

Hardy was the most cinematic of the pre-film novelists, and here as elsewhere in his novels he demonstrates his ability to give power and poignancy to commonplace – even stereotyped – emotions by artful effects of lighting and perspective. The opening chapter, set in a parish church closely modelled on Hardy's own at Stinsford, is an excellent example. Afternoon service in winter is in progress. From the gallery Egbert looks down intently at Geraldine in her pew below, as the natural light fades from the windows and the preacher's candles provide the only illumination:

The lady was the single person besides the preacher whose face was turned westwards, the pew that she occupied being the only one in the church in which the seat went all around. She reclined in her corner, her bonnet and dress growing by degrees invisible, and at last only her upturned face could be discerned, a solitary white spot against the black surface of the wainscot.

This intensely visualised scene symbolises the social gap between the lovers, expresses the effort of will needed to maintain their relationship, and hints at its tragic conclusion. All the most important encounters between the lovers take place in darkness, or the melancholy semi-darkness that follows dusk or precedes dawn, fitfully illuminated by candlelight or firelight. We know that there were several night-scenes in *The Poor Man and the Lady*, but it would be interesting to know whether they were so artfully exploited for emotive effect; or whether this kind of patterning was some-

thing that came into Hardy's fiction as his political passion abated.

Paul Addison

Yoked

David Lloyd George and the British Labour Movement by C. J. WRIGLEY *Harvester Press* £10.50

From the first years of the 20th century right down to 1922 Lloyd George was in effect the chief intermediary between working-class and Establishment politics. Before 1914 he was the champion of radicalism and social reform, keeping Liberalism on its toes and outbidding the youthful Labour Party for working-class support. In the first world war he improvised a one-sided social contract with the trade unions whereby they sacrificed their rule-books and real wages for the sake of speeding up war production. During the massive strike wave of 1919-21 he was the chief appeaser and at the same time the most artful antagonist of organised labour. Rarely is a British politician found to be so central to a major problem for so long, and C. J. Wrigley can claim that for once biography and wider analysis are in harmony.

But are they? On the jacket of Dr Wrigley's book is a wartime cartoon showing Lloyd George urging on two horses labelled 'capital' and 'labour' which he has yoked together to pull a waggon-load of munitions. It seems to me that Dr Wrigley confronts a similar problem in trying to harness two high-spirited themes in one book. The aim of illuminating Lloyd George's response to labour may be his stated purpose, but he is naturally interested in the response of institutions as well: he would like to discuss the strategy of the Liberal party, or the Ministry of Munitions, as such. The tension is present throughout the book, and in the end neither the biographical nor the wider problems are put fully through their paces. But while Dr Wrigley does not go deeply into Lloyd George's motivation, he demonstrates as never before the extent and character of his involvement with the world of labour, and reinforces the view that Lloyd George was a great historic force in his own right.

Although Lloyd George was often regarded as the most rootless of political beings, he was surprisingly successful in combining self-advancement with self-realisation. He began his career, as Dr Wrigley points out, as an agrarian radical in the Victorian mould. A cottage-bred Welsh nonconformist, he detested the old Establishment of the landlord class and the Church of England, and on the eve of war in 1914 it was still the landlords he was preparing to fight. Of the industrial struggle he had no experience, and he regarded Labour as one of the many interests which ought to be contained within Liberalism. Lloyd George's success was a powerful testimony to the doctrines of self-help and it was natural for him to admire business-

men who, like himself, had struggled up the hard way. His government of 1916 was indeed the final step in the long process whereby industrialists were admitted to power and status in Britain.

In the Asquith phase of the first world war, it was Lloyd George time and again who grasped the urgency of labour questions, and as Prime Minister later on he still kept his finger on the pulse. He was in a sense the complete pragmatist, giving way to the South Wales miners but smashing the Clydeside shop stewards; leading on the trade-union leaders by degrees to accept the relaxation of restrictive practices. The story has been told before, but Dr Wrigley's thoroughly researched account explains Lloyd George's technique with patience and clarity. The overriding aim was to build up the power of the official trade-union leaders over the rank and file, isolating the 'militants' by timely concessions channelled through the union bureaucracy. If Lloyd George had nothing much to offer labour in return for their cooperation, the union leaders never insisted on a clear programme of demands. Prices steadily outran wages until the labour unrest of 1917 forced the government to take action, and profiteering was never seriously checked.

Dr Wrigley's book is by no means light reading, but by calling a halt on Armistice Day it seems to stop too soon. In the aftermath of war, the Labour Party became a major force for the first time, and the unions posed a real threat to the power of the cabinet. Dr Wrigley has researched this fascinating and stormy period, in which Lloyd George remained the kingpin for another four years: but perhaps the economics of publishing have imposed a guillotine.

John Raymond

Ravisht

The Diary of Samuel Pepys, Vol. IX: 1668-9 edited by R. C. LATHAM and H. W. MATTHEWS *Bell* £8.50

On 31 May 1669 Pepys, aged 37, in fear of blindness, closed his diary,

I not being able to do it any longer . . . and therefore resolve from this time forward to have it kept by my people in long-hand and must therefore be contented to set down no more than is fit for them and all the world to know: or if there be anything (which cannot be much, now my amours to Deb are past, and my eyes hindering me in almost all other pleasures), I must endeavour to keep a margin in my book open . . . And so I betake myself to that course which is almost as much as to see myself go into my grave . . .

As we know – though he could not – Pepys did not go blind. Yet this entry does mark an end: the end of himself as the recorder of himself and his experience, the start of his endenizenment in the mind of posterity once that record was given to the world and 'he became his admirers'. The years of peril, more years of achievement, the sweets

of retirement, were all to come. Here, in the sharpest and most immediate sense, Pepys takes leave of us.

His latest biographer, Richard Ollard, has dwelt at length on what he calls Pepys's 'multiplicity of consciousness'. To contemplate his life, day by day, domestic, professional, social, is, as he says, like watching an electric egg-whisk, so fast do the interlocking circles of his nature revolve in a whirr of ego, business appetite, duty, temperament. Yet to read Pepys at a stretch is to become aware of his sovereign gift of empathy – an innate sixth sense of the condition and behaviour of other people that has no visible connection with his own fierce egocentricity or his spring of private happiness.

At the play he watches Lady Castlemaine and observes 'one thing of familiarity':

she called to one of her women . . . for a little patch off her face and put it into her mouth and wetted it and so clapped it on her own on the side of her mouth, I suppose she feeling a pimple rising there.

It is as if Pepys, the miraculous observer, a part of all that he has met, were a casual spy on life itself – a cock-fight, a duel ('perhaps the most notorious of the period in England', says a note), the ravages of old age on a neighbour, the suicide of a relative, ruined by the Fire. Everything is tasted and noted and marked down – especially bad weather.

These last 17 months of the diary includes Pepys's great moment of triumph – his defence of the Navy Office before the House of Commons – and his wife's discovery, on a Sunday after supper, of his relationship with Deb Willett,

which occasioned the greatest sorrow to me that ever I knew in this world, for my wife, coming up suddenly, did find me embracing the girl con my hand sub su coats; and indeed I was with my main in her sonny. I was at a wonderful loss upon it, and the girl also . . . but my wife was struck mute and grew angry, and as her voice came to her, grew quite out of order . . .

The poor girl was out of the house and out of Pepys's life – though not, as he feared, so immediately out of his mind – within the fortnight. Next summer Pepys and his wife spent his leave on a tour of France, Holland and Flanders. At Amsterdam she caught the fever that killed her that November.

Pepys's own moments of sheer happiness – the music on Twelfth Night or the wind-musique when the Angell comes down in the Virgin Mary, which was so sweet that 'it ravisht me . . . so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife' – are faithfully recorded. He was a great reading man, but one feels that he read for instruction rather than reflection. He records his purchase of Montaigne (in Florio's translation, for Cotton's he had already) and of *Leviathan*, but does not say what he thought of them, though he got the latter second-hand and notes the bishops' anger against it. Hobbes defined laughter as sudden glory. To Pepys's readers there are times when almost the whole of human experience and sensation, the drudgery and drabness, the fears and perils and suspicions, are a perpetual ravishment.

Susannah Clapp

Letter Day

The Stepdaughter by CAROLINE BLACKWOOD
Duckworth £2.95

The Ecstasy of Dr Miriam Garner by ELAINE FEINSTEIN
Hutchinson £3.75

A Lavender Trip by SASHA MOORSOM
Bodley Head £3.50

The Last Summer of the Men Shortage by GERALDINE HALLS
Constable £2.95

Anxiously assuming an interested audience, the writer of letters is free to practise unburdening and evasiveness in equally large quantities. Much of Caroline Blackwood's success in her good first novel comes from the witty recognition of this. The undispatched letters which make up the narrative of *The Stepdaughter* are, bleakly, addressed to an infinitely patient and cherishable nobody and tell a story which could only have been less self-aware presented as straight dramatic monologue, and more cumbersome as full dialogue.

The narrator is a dumped woman. While her husband holds Parisian hands by candle-light, 'K' – a difficult name to take – glares round her sumptuous New York apartment: neglecting her small daughter, shrinking from the ministrations of her women's-libbing friends, angry at being deserted, made wretched by her anger. She sprays envious disdain on the French au pair, able to pen proper letters home in 'merciless slanted handwriting', but reserves her most elaborate wrath for Renata, her 'Humpty Dumpty' of a stepdaughter, who divides her time between spotty passivity in front of the television and the manufacturing of vast quantities of instant cakes, which she doesn't share. 'Renata's weight,' K comments, 'is enormous, and I feel she should sometimes try to pull it.'

Guilt and resentments cluster round Renata's stolid head: she is at once reminder, burden, grisly warning and husbandly threat – no Renata, no apartment. But her hefty, hated frame is never allowed to seem merely a reflection of K's frame of mind. Unengaging to the last, Renata nevertheless manages to pull some surprises, and proves more gloomily in touch with the outside world than her stepmother. It is no surprise that a book which manages to accommodate so many changes of opinion and alternative views should also be funny.

The heroine of Elaine Feinstein's new novel is haunted in an altogether more decisive manner. Dr Miriam Garner is a big and beautiful Arabist who wings back to Cambridge – freshly sensuous from a broken affair – to find her professor father involved with time travel and her steely ex-lover. Experiments are underway with a shambling girl housekeeper, but it is the strong and sceptical Miriam who actually gets lassooed by a time loop and transported – via potions, flashing lights, a 'monstrous penis' and continuous orgasm – to 11th-century Toledo: Europe before the split of faiths. She gets back to hectic melo-

drama and the arms of boring, rational Bernard, but Toledo and Cambridge remain intricately intermeshed. Both settings are attentively realised.

Elaine Feinstein's novels have always entertained suggestions of the ghostly and ghastly, but until now these have operated chiefly as hissing undertones and a hesitancy about the edges of characters' lives. Now the spectres have been unleashed and, though it's not easy to give whole-hearted assent to their original necessity, the open acknowledgment of their presence brings remarkable release. The sense which nearly all her characters have had of being in thrall is at its most convincing; their everyday lives appear solid by contrast, as – no longer so eager to cosset their mysteriousness – they are allowed to stray from intensity into humour and waywardness. The departure from determined terseness is to be welcomed, as is a rather less spiky prose style. Though not without its wilful obscurities and mystifications, this is an advance for a writer of strength.

Sasha Moorsom's sad but sexy first novel is strongest on atmospheric scene-painting, weakest when turning its relationships into sociology. A school counsellor, battered by demands from her husband to produce chocolate mousse and smiles for crass colleagues, and by pleas from schoolchildren to arrange abortions or instant literacy, retreats to Provence for the summer with her two small children, and almost immediately launches into a doomed affair with a local free spirit. Drama and an identity crisis are quick to follow – the former tactfully and effectively administered, the latter requiring rather too frequent recourse to Donne and Eliot. Much is made of the difficult time a woman can have being a 'servicing machine' for an ambitious husband. But though few would deny the justness of the reproach, a husband so ambitious, so unwinningly meticulous, and so convinced that lust is 'unfeminine' is too much of a bad thing to make the point fairly.

A more twinkly version of female despair is provided by Geraldine Halls. *The Last Summer of the Men Shortage* is set in the Sydney of 1945 and features Claudia, who's rounded, untidy and impulsive, and Dinah, who's literary and disapproving. Anxious to secure their shared flat for meetings with a married and unpleasant man, Claudia attempts to introduce her friend to eligible men who might whisk her away. But though Dinah has a way with words – she is given to making speeches about correct usage – she has a hard time with prospective suitors, who quail at the knowledge that she has nearly finished Proust and is thought to look like Katherine Mansfield. Humiliations, churlishness and fractured friendship take place before Claudia ceases to be a kindly siren and settles down (with Dinah's fellow), and Dinah, relieved at last of her virginity, and relieved at feeling friendly again, escapes to England to write. Geraldine Halls has a good eye for girlish griefs and fears – and her novel contains some fetching nostalgia about rented wirelesses and knickers made from parachute elastic. But it's a pity that her theme is fed by so small a plot, and that her heroine's feeling that she is deeper than most people should be so predictably vindicated.

Films

John Coleman

Something Rotten

Orders Phoenix, East Finchley

Leadbelly Ritz

Gator Dominion

The Deluge Paris Pullman

As if things weren't worrying enough, along comes Michel Brault's *Orders* to set a highly practical and radical cat among the liberal pigeons. This painful French-Canadian film, made a couple of years ago, winner of a best director's award at last year's Cannes, recounts – no, re-counts – the cost to a number of people arrested in Quebec in 1970 after the FIQ (*Front de Libération du Québec*) had kidnapped our commercial attaché, subsequently released, and the local minister of labour and immigration, subsequently dead. The mayor of Montreal appealed to higher-ups, after the kidnappings, and the federal government responded by putting Quebec under martial law.

Anyone could be arrested any time without official warrant or evident reason. Some 450 men and women were. This is where your reviewer, rather echoing the film (which is drawn from the testimonies of 50 or so arrestees), chooses to eschew the rights and wrongs of politics in favour of a hard look at what happens when probably innocent humans find themselves caught up in a sweeping, sanctioned drag-net. I do not know how I would have behaved as a minister, confronted by terrorism; nor what my comportment might have been as a copper with *carte blanche*, acting on orders from above; simply, I could no more have filled one of those roles than I could have streaked at Lord's or kicked a granny. Outside the game, then, one is free to ignore the terrible strains of meeting evil with a blind eye, ostensibly in the cause of good.

What Michel Brault has done, taking off from real events, is to remove the blinker from one side of God's gift of sight. We are invited to stare at something a good deal smaller than the blatant, physical horrors of Auschwitz or Buchenwald: at just what occurs when individuals are burglarised in their most private parts, knowing themselves faultless on a charge that is anyway never declared, subjected to becoming objects. Brault achieves his alerting (if-you-like Kafka) occasion by grainy, black-and-white processes: when he moves into colour, in some of the prison-sequences, it is felt as no more than a mid-film upping of the budget, a minor mistake. He follows the stories of a handful of suspects; the style is staccato, leaning into such devices as voices-over, texts screened, the principal actors announcing themselves briefly before moving into their skin-fitting roles. It is enormously a plus to M. Brault that businesses one had thought of as jaw-cracking, Godardian, at the least borrowed and obvious, sustain rather than diminish the attention. He knows where to put his camera, how close to bring

it in on things (a cell-bed with its blankets, bar of soap, minimal lay-out) and persons (a face not crying while its owner's voice says it would like to, a suspect standing naked – with parted buttocks – during a random, night-time prison search).

The cool message in a rarely over-heated movie hovers around how little it takes to disorientate hitherto sane and normally proud people: it is about humiliation – without whips or thumb-screws – and the mindless dominance of people under 'orders': no one is responsible. 'What we suffered wasn't so very important. The important thing is to realise that something's rotten somewhere. It mustn't be allowed to spread,' says one of the victims at the end. This is a film without performances, everybody is so into their part. It leaves one with an increased dose of unease. Not only who guards the guards, but who creates them and how much of the guard is there in you, me, all the others out there? Victims we understand already.

The rest are fairly silly. Among my ignorances is a general nescience about the birth of the blues. Gordon Parks is a black director of talent, not young (he was born in 1912), and with a respectable background in straightforward photography. He made *Shaft* and the rest is history, of a sort. His *Leadbelly*, siphoned off the knife-hard life of one Huddie Ledbetter (here reincarnated by Roger E. Mosley, with HiTide Harris providing the actual vocals), aims to encapsulate the stop-and-start career of a criminal, musical natural. Why they couldn't use Ledbetter's own voice, since the film shows that remarkable whitey, John Lomax, recording him in jail for the Library of Congress, is a mystery to me. But so is much else in this territory. Largely staffed by blacks, the film is notable for that alone, one supposes. Yet condescension Mr Parks can do without. 'It's gonna cost you, to learn the blues,' warns a whore-house madam on Fannin' Street – she has rather taken to the singing hick with a guitar – and, my goodness, it does. They meet up again, to drop into the idiom, after his first release from prison, on a derelict set (Fannin' Street, boarded-up and abandoned), he grey-haired under his hat and she an absolute old loser, in a theatrical episode that looks like something rejected from *Porgy and Bess*: paper blowing wildly, studio-fashion, down the road, only the two of them in sight, she having kept a couple of his favourite guitar-picks in her bosom for nigh on 20 years.

This not very good rehabilitation of a fine, raunchy creator of middle-art has its undeniable moments: they are well spaced. A peculiarly awful scene, clearly the delight of the director of photography, Bruce Surtees, shows ageing Leadbelly putting on a requested show for the Governor and

white, fluttering, smiley guests. It is strictly set-piece and undermines the race-and-chase plausibility of what has gone before, nowhere substantial.

Gator is Burt Reynolds misdirecting himself in a weird and, here and there, uncommonly nasty piece about a Southern moonshiner who is blackmailed by the fuzz into capturing a bigger shit than he is. There are scenes that come on like tantrums: *Gator* (Reynolds) staggers into a manner of whore-house full of under-16 drugged cuties; there is wild dialogue that is more reminiscent of Altman than Aldrich (a director under whom Mr Reynolds, with his pasted-together front-teeth, has worked); there is a hell of a lot of hilarity, a load of close-up laughter, in an event that has me very fond of a grand American girl working for TV (Lauren Hutton, with a cute, commented-on gap between her dental grin – molars are overworked, with nowt to chew on) and a shade sad about the waste of that excellent actor, Jack Weston, as an undercover New York cop. *The Deluge* bores for Poland, a costume-drama with that playboy of the iron curtain, Daniel Olbrychski, lurching under a weight of 17th-century machismo, through three hours and worse of pseudo-history. Even the Poles who surrounded me when I visited the Paris Pullman to see it (two-thirds of it, to be honest) forbore to cheer.

Television

James Cameron

Classy Stares

Our telly set comes on form only when it plays *Upstairs, Downstairs*, because that is the story of its life. Recently we banished it to the top of the house, so that when the family addicts crouch goggling at the interminable weekend ball-games I can play Hudson and stay below stairs. Already I think twice these days before I crawl up all the way to look at *anything*, and if I probably miss a lot of excellent TV I also dodge a lot of drivel.

My problem is that I have rather a liking for drivel; good drivel, that is, like the daft Colombo and the obese and awful Cannon. Last week Dennis Potter quoted Martin Amis to the effect that 'intelligent people pine for the rubbishy, frivolous and ephemeral'; if that is true then I'm in the right set. As for good television, I can take it or leave it, if it entails climbing stairs. Every now and then I find myself getting badly hooked again, especially if the film is anything about dolphins, as happily it so often is, now that they have discovered that these things are so much brainier than man. Wait till the dolphins start making documentaries about the BBC. It may be a lot sooner than you think.

Last weekend was a holiday, for which traditionally the channels save up their real suet puddings. I therefore found myself only occasionally climbing up the

South Col to what I now very properly call the Box Room. Not altogether without reward, either.

Item: Dad's Army is the best example of ensemble playing here or anywhere. *Item:* David Attenborough can upstage even a chimpanzee, which is true professionalism. *Item:* The cool Angela Rippon gives the impression of disapproving of *all* news, good or bad. *Item: Clayhanger* is just what it sounds: adhesive, interminable.

Other than watching an Eastern swami contemplating his navel, few things are more instructive than watching the BBC contemplating its own mythology. This it did for what seemed like hours on Second Houses's *Mirror on Class* (BBC-2), which rather diffidently examined, by way of Richard Hoggart and Melvyn Bragg, the TV responses to 'class' attitudes over a generation. Some terrible conscience was at work here. They dug up forgotten clips from the suburban *Grove Family* and some vintage *Coronation Street*. There was a real period piece in Mrs Digby Morton's *Lessons In Etiquette*; it was hard to believe it was not a parody but a real expression of the BBC's assumptions only 20 years ago of everybody's dotty social aspirations.

There was Max Robertson from a 1956 *Panorama* (in the days when people called interviewers 'Sir') talking to school-leavers with a perceptible shift of attitude between the grammar-schoolers and the sec. mods. ('You want to be a tiler? How *very* interesting.') Above all there was a bizarre encounter with a coven of donnish types in Oxford – Coghill, Rowse, Betjeman, all perched like budgies round a chair to accommodate the old fixed-camera position – bleating away about the 'pursuit of truth' and so on; it was hard to believe that one hadn't wandered into *Monty Python*.

Hoggart and Bragg are both excellent broadcasters, fortunately; otherwise there would have been an awkwardness in Dr Hoggart's continual reminders of his own impeccably lowly origin, giving his feed Melvyn Bragg quite a time keeping down, as it were, with the Hoggarts. The best argument was certainly the *News* example – the illustration was the *News* on the recent dustmen's strike in Glasgow, loaded as hell. Nobody even hinted at the *cause* of the strike: as Mr Hoggart said, TV news is informed simply by the values of the pop press. Thus management is shown in smart offices (stability); you film strikers on picket-lines (insurrection) – not through any Establishment conspiracy; that is just the pop convention; it saves both time and thought. Considering the conditions in which TV news-crews work it is probably inevitable: imitate, don't innovate; the slogan of journalism throughout the years.

Current Affairs, it seemed, got a slightly better report: perhaps they had more time. The illustration was a 1974 *All In A Day*, in which some bemused retired steel-worker gets his hand-out, first on the shop floor, and then in the director's office. The words were much the same, but oh dear, the difference. The Current Affairs boys, suggested Hoggart, had the sort of commitment that impelled them to film this poor deferential redundant fiddling with his cloth cap behind his back while he was

being patronised by his boss. Well, who knows? Maybe they just needed a cutaway.

I missed *The Naked Civil Servant* first time round, which put me at a conversational disadvantage for months. This, as the world must know, is John Gold's drama-documentary of the story of Quentin Crisp, the Queer of the Year. I can understand its impact. Ms Crisp, this fantastic exhibitionist, who must surely be the vainest near-man alive, wrote his own story: he is a female-male homosexual whose mission is to *épater les bourgeois*, with his middle-aged make-up, his hennaed hair, his importuning. It is easy to understand how John Hurt won his Actor of the Year thing for his impersonation of this wholly outrageous, brave, pathetic, ridiculous victim of the society he despises, and which despised him. Whether the liberation cause is promoted by this quite brilliant charade I don't know, and by good fortune don't especially care, but this could hardly be bettered as a considered portrait of how mournful it is to be gay.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Cosmological

Heaven and Hell Greenwich

Dimetos Comedy

Noah Chichester

God was busy in theatreland last week. He postponed the opening of *The Iceman Cometh* at the Aldwych and dropped a thunderbolt on a Terson premiere at the Open Space; he was obsequiously lauded by André Obey, doubted by John Mortimer, and transformed into a sort of spiritual chlorophyll, an immanence green, by Athol Fugard. My own response to this was, first, gratitude at having my critical burden lightened, second, regret that the level of metaphysical debate wasn't higher. Dramatists nowadays tend to concentrate on our relationship with other men, other women and society, and refuse to speculate on our place, or lack of it, in the universe beyond. Indeed, I can recall only one recent British play that dared raise its eyes much higher than our collective noses, Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers*; and, even though John Mortimer delves into Christian cosmology for the title of his double-bill, he hasn't the temperament to break what's become a theatrical taboo. *Heaven* involves two Englishmen who awake in an Italian hospice emblazoned with High-Renaissance angels and conclude, on this flimsy evidence, that they're doomed to eternal bliss; and *Hell* occurs in a lugubrious vicarage deep in Honest-to-God country. But if there's a subject that links them, it's nothing more mysterious than repression, frustration, the joylessness around us.

One hospital patient is Denholm Eliot with thin-rimmed specs over his eyes, a circular saw somewhere in his throat and

invisible clamps pursing his lips into a supercilious sneer. He's a fastidious lecturer whose speciality is Byron, life and works, a subject his neighbour, a sweaty businessman played by Peter Woodthorpe, thinks scarcely family reading. But the irony is that this literary prude is a practising sensualist. It is he who turns out to have lived the Byronic life, down to bug-gery at school and incest with his sister, and it is Mr Eliot's cue to be shocked, then envious, then numbly admiring. For all his academic passion, this character is a dry stick, pre-eminently qualified for membership of that club for frayed loners and emotional down-and-outs that has its headquarters in Mortimer's plays. The point is made with wit and style, but not a lot of plausibility. Both invalids are victims of an author who knows what he wants them to mean and will brook no resistance from either: the fable has determined the characters, not the characters the fable.

Hell seems to me better, though it, too, tends towards the anecdotal. This time, Woodthorpe is an owlish, precious cleric with a knack for organising interdenominational gay tea-parties, and Eliot, in RAF whiskers, is the evangelical padre seconded to him. At first the new curate embarrasses everyone with his prayers, moralising, and ra-ra talk of prancing Satan. But his eventual impact is more positive. He seduces the vicar's wife, who has been iced up by her husband's blandly liberated attitude to sex, and sneaks enough loaves and fishes into the kitchen to persuade even an avante-garde bishop that miracles still occur. The household is transfigured by this metaphysical con-man. Eleanor Bron, playing the spinsterly wife, throws off her frumpy cardigan and re-emerges in a summer shift, all pink and smiling where she was anguished and matt-beige, and Woodthorpe falls reverently and happily to his underused knees. Mortimer's point is not, of course, that we must restore God to religion: rather, that religion still has a use if it can get back its entertaining magic, its healing delusions, not to mention that sense of sin which supposedly adds piquancy to sex. In other words, the play is once again about emotional failure and how best to live with it.

It's a cynical, skittish piece, but it would take a saint to resist it after the leaden humourlessness of *Dimetos*. This paralysed my rump at Edinburgh last year, and I don't find it vastly improved either by its newly-acquired audibility or by the arrival of Paul Scofield, all ravaged, brooding and sepulchral as the engineer whose furtive lust for his niece provokes her suicide, his despair and an awful lot of play. It exists in no-man's-land, marooned between myth and the South Africa of which Fugard has so often written with precision and eloquence. There's much self-conscious symbolism – even a horse trapped in a well, by all that's Freudian – and there are many references to an unspecified 'city' whose iniquities *Dimetos* has fled. Mostly, the effect is ponderously unreal. All the same, Fugard has achieved enough in his time to give damnation pause; he will write well again, though his lack of self-criticism here suggests he should think hard the next time he's tempted to direct his own work.

At any rate, the experiment will have been worthwhile if he takes its lesson: which is surely that he's far better at universalising the particular than at particularising the universal.

The play slowly shifts Dimetos from his faith in science to a vague deism, a oneness with nature, less comprehensible but also less mindless than the theology put across by the eponymous Obey. Noah was apparently right to resist Ham's determination to fix a rudder to the ark and steer it in some sensible direction: that is, right to cling to a faith that excludes all human initiative and condemns anything but passive submission to the divine plan. Ham, in fact, is wilful and ambitious, not to say unkind to animals, a swaggering summary of all that the flood tried (and failed) to wash away. This seems to me sheer obscurantism, no less objectionable for the mushiness of a production that reduces Noah's apocalyptic voyage to a teddy bear's picnic and the patriarch himself to the genial family retainer who has organised it.

Music

Bayan Northcott

Rites of Summer

American Bicentenary Concert QEH
Die Feen and *Das Liebesverbot* Radio 3
 Richard Wagner by HANS GAL Gollancz
 £5.50

It is largely thanks to the Declaration of Independence that the Bayreuth Festival celebrates its hundredth anniversary this summer. Had Wagner not received a 5,000 dollar commission from Philadelphia for a Centennial *Festmarsch* early in 1876, he might well have had to postpone his grand inauguration indefinitely for lack of funds. Whether or not the Philadelphians felt the rhodomontade he scribbled them entirely worth the cash, they probably appreciated its confidence and finish: musically, America was still very much a colony. What it has developed into a mere century later is far more difficult to summarise. This is not just because intervening figures like Ives have played such havoc with tidy European notions of musical evolution, but also because the chronic decentralisation of music-making through innumerable state capitals, campuses, local radio stations and shoe-string record companies makes it almost impossible to gain a balanced view of what is going on there at any one time. So it was a pity that the London Sinfonietta's American sampler last Friday should offer, with one exception, works already known in London.

Indeed *The Unanswered Question* – that semi-aleatory dialogue for wind and trumpet against an off-stage string chorale of transcendental calm – has almost become Ives's signature tune, although some of his neglected 'Sets' for small orchestra have far more substance. And since Copland's

silvery *Appalachian Spring* was being given in its rarely-heard original scoring for 13 instruments, the interesting eight-minute chunk he omitted from the orchestral suite could surely also have been included. Morton Feldman's *For Frank O'Hara* (1973) represented the American generation born in the Twenties – a characteristic sequence of gentle sounds becalmed in silence, apart from one brutal side-drum role (presumably an evocation of the beach taxi that did for the late lamented New York poet in his 41st year). But even the poised direction of Michael Tilson Thomas in this (as throughout the concert) failed to reveal anything that Feldman has not said dozens of times already.

The novelty was another matter, though. At 39, David Del Tredici presides over an output largely comprising joke settings of *Alice in Wonderland*. But where the average English composer so easily lapses into whimsy, Del Tredici's exploitation of whole-tone scale *frissons* and cartoon music clichés has a disciplined relentlessness that eventually becomes sinister. *Syzygy* (1966), for soprano, horn and two instrumental groups, which was receiving its first British performance, is actually a setting of two James Joyce lyrics, but inhabits the same expressive world. The piece begins bizarrely with a kind of mirror duet for piccolo and double bassoon and large tracts of it consists of tiny, palindromic structures which squiggle around hysterically or settle into icy, chiming immobility. Even Deborah Cook's spot-on soprano intonation and Michael Thompson's wonderfully subtle horn phrasing could not quite convince me that the work's moonstruck glitter justified its considerable length. But if the musical personality it revealed remains narrow, it is also memorably odd.

Meanwhile, Wagnermania is back, to judge by the television and the colour supplements. But the current BBC series of all the operas in chronological order more than compensates – and then there is the entertaining corrective of Hans Gal's tart little *Life and Works*. This is, to say the least, reductive in approach: once the full dreadfulness of Wagner's behaviour and the confusion of his aims are admitted, Dr Gal argues, his greatness boils down to one simple quality – a genius for operatic effect. As far as the three earliest operas are concerned, the mature Wagner seems to have concurred, dismissing *Die Feen*, *Das Liebesverbot* and *Rienzi* merely as attempts to get the influences of Weber, Bellini and Meyerbeer respectively out of his system. In fact he never heard the first of them complete (nor probably did anyone else until last month's broadcast) and banned all three from the Bayreuth cannon. Yet *Die Feen* and *Das Liebesverbot* alone (*Rienzi* follows on 27 June) already begin to upset Dr Gal's neat thesis, helped on by committed conducting from Edward Downes and soprano leads of a Wagnerian power one had hitherto imagined quite outside the expressive range of April Cantelo.

Admittedly the derivative, short-winded detail of much of the music seems to support the common assumption that Wagner developed far more quickly as a dramatist than a musician; the 20-year-old composer had after all been studying harmony seri-

ously for only two years when he completed *Die Feen*. Admittedly the carnival setting of *Das Liebesverbot* (a version of *Mea for Measure* transferred to Palermo) reverts in some frivolities uncannily prophetic of Offenbach. Yet the remarkably competent orchestration of even the overture to *Feen* hints at the special sweetness of *Lohengrin* while the odd, medieval melody of the King's Orphic appeal in the last act looks forward not only to the contest in *Tannhäuser* but even to *Meistersinger* Prize Song. The real reason, though, is the absolutely characteristic time scale. Far from bloating up the standard operatic procedures, Wagner's struggles must have been a matter of tending his musical invention to 'fit' the broadness of pacing that was given him by an almost biological sense. Whether accounts of this a more theatrical or musical quality is surely a non-argument. What lapses is the charge of wilfulness: could he have developed only in the direction that he did.

In General

Richard North

Counter Habitat

When Peter Shore returns from his journey to Habitat, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver (the British delegation's costs are reported to be £50,000), I hope a diligent stay-at-home official at the Department of the Environment will be able to tell him something about the results of a little effort which has been shoe-strung together at the Surrey Downs abandoned 'island' district in what a Tenant's Association man described as 'Downtown Rotherhithe'. It is called Peculiar Habitat, A Festival of Alternative Living, and runs until this Sunday. Co-ordinated by Intermediate Technology Publications, Comtek, Street Farmers, and the magazine *Resurgence* and *Undercurrents*, it is intended to be a mixture of hardware (tools, mills, solar panels and bikes, especially) and software (seminars, theatre and shows).

Bryn Bird's reinforced brick 25 windmill is the most tangible success so far: it is expected to be pumping Thames water to local allotments by the end of the week. For the rest, battered VW vans scatter of tents, a bivouacked food counter, a field kitchen, a trailer-stage (electric power has been hampered by a lack of electricity and various stalls, more or less complete, are at the site. The situation, in the words of Bruce Haggart, the laconic publicist for the festival, 'is fluid'; doubtless more bits will appear over the next few days.

By Monday night, when this is written, the seminars on planning, alternative education and the farming of wasteland have been held. Wide disagreement about how far to go in creating an alternative to industrial capitalism could hardly fa-

be at the heart of the matter. There are those who simply take land, houses and materials and insist that a start must be made; others aim to persuade councils and governments that less wasteful means to their ends do make political as well as environmental sense. In between are myriad but chartable degrees. Hilary Peters, for instance, has goats and chickens at the dockside farm she shares with Ken Bushell, by courtesy of the local council and scraps from greengrocers. A wild-haired man explained that for his part he was 'involved in a low-profile landgrab, and we squat a church with a solar roof'.

There was Mr Bird, whose Cretan-sailed mill is for him an 'example of the way civil engineering's going to go'. Others argued that a lower level in building regulations must be introduced for otherwise uneconomic rehabilitation of old buildings. One group has short-leased two 19th century terraced houses in Rotherhithe Street, to be turned into an ecological home with attic greenhouse. Meanwhile, people from the neighbouring housing estates, gardening allotments on the old docks look up from their cabbages at the bizarre goings-on with a fair degree of tolerance. After all, as one dungareed worker remarked while buying some dockland eggs, 'You can't beat nature, can you?'

For information about remaining events, ring Fiona Cantell on 01-240 2106.

Weekend Competition

No 2415 Set by Tim Hopkins

Competitors are asked to compose a letter terminating a love affair from any well-known writer, past or present. Up to 150 words or 15 lines by 18 June.

Result of No 2412 Set by Little Keith

Competitors were asked to give yet another salvo of unhelpful advice to foreign tourists.

Report by Spiro Keats

I expected the likes of Claudio Vita-Finzi to keep a low profile this week – but not him, oh no. A very funny and pleasingly xenophobic entry. I decided not to mind whether various squibs had been used before, so no bleating. £6 to Blackford, Lipton and Alexander, and £1.50 per hint thereafter.

Many shops and garages give away free postage stamps.

In most railway carriages the steward may be summoned by pulling on the red chain situated near the roof.

Prices quoted by taxi drivers, bus conductors and railway booking clerks are open to friendly haggling (you should need to pay about half the original quoted price).

Underground ticket machines take most foreign coins.

PAT BLACKFORD

All the London restaurants listed in this year's editions of the leading gourmet guides have a special offer this summer: half-price meals to parties of *thirty or more* foreign tourists arriving between 7.30 and 9 p.m., Saturday evenings only. Please have passports ready – and, please, to preserve the informality of

the occasion, absolutely *no* booking.

To avoid an unmanageable rush, London Transport has not publicly announced the early opening of the new Underground line from Piccadilly to Heathrow Airport. It's much faster than the airport bus, so you can safely allow your group that extra, leisurely half-hour of last-minute shopping before they leave to catch the plane.

Most foreign tourists know that in London they are encouraged to take a piece of fruit, free of charge, from any open-air stall or display.

MICHAEL LIPTON

Parking regulations in Britain are simple and logical. The absence of a yellow line by the curb indicates that you may never park there; a broken yellow line, that you may park for part of the day; a solid yellow line, that you may park indefinitely; and a double yellow line, that double parking for extended periods is allowed.

Comments from the public are always welcome in courts of law. When you start speaking an usher will call 'Silence in court' to ensure that you are heard without interruption.

When travelling by train, remember that it is considered impolite not to help anyone who is doing *The Times* crossword puzzle.

PETER ALEXANDER

If you can pluck one of the white hairs out of a Horse Guard's helmet-plume, you get a week's free stay at the famous 'Scrubs' Hotel. And if you are ever up in Manchester and in a 'boozier' – and you wish to 'break the ice', remember the nickname of the local team and go in shouting 'Up the Saints!'

And if you are *enjoying* your stay, there is a set slogan for chalking on walls – Buckingham Palace, places like that – *I Revere Albion* – just the initials will do.

RODDY REDDING

The Monument commemorates the Great Fire of London: on reaching the top, your party is invited to take part in symbolic firefighting by urinating through the railings onto the heads of the busy fish porters below, who wear bowler hats for protection; they will respond with cheerful waves and merry shouts in their colourful language.

JIM ANTHONY

As a good-will gesture, representatives of the Irish government are leaving surprise parcels all over London. Do not spoil their fun or affront their native shyness by attempting to speak with them. Wait for them to move on, then it is your right to pick up the parcel and take it home.

B. BALDWIN

As in Moscow foreign tourists have preference in London. Always proceed to the head of any queue, merely waving your passport.

If it's 'blue films' you're after, look for a building with a blue lamp outside.

P. W. R. FOOT

In Scotland, Gentlemen's Lavatories are indicated by a picture of a man in a kilt.

A. C. C. BRODIE

The Supermarket: The wire baskets provided by these establishments are most unsatisfactory, small items having an irritating tendency to fall through the mesh. It is better to carry a capacious holdall into which purchases can be conveniently slipped. This should be done rapidly and unobtrusively, in order not to discommode other shoppers.

PETER PETERSON

Prostitutes are permitted to solicit only on certain days, when they can be recognised by the boxes of coins which they rattle to attract clients.

P. M. G. SCHIEL

Bus conductors like to be paid in £5 and £10 notes as they hate carrying heavy coins up and down the stairs.

C. VITA-FINZI



Assiac

Chess Board

No 1384

Meet The Masters

Welcome re-issue of a famous book by *Euwe* in a Dover paperback, 279 pp for £2.30 at *Constable*. The book contains well picked gems by Capablanca, Alekhine, Fine, Keres, Flohr, Euwe, Botvinnik, Reshevsky and should continue proving most useful for any student of the game. Alas, there is one almost unpardonable mishap which should be corrected in future editions. The notes of Lasker-Reshevsky Nottingham 1936 have been left unchanged and thereby quite wrong and, indeed, misleading. That game has been given a most thorough analysis by Edith Keller, the GDR master and her husband Prof. L. Herrmann and turned out to be one of the very rare cases of Lasker afraid of ghosts. To go into detail would take up about thrice the space of this column, and, oddly enough, the analysis (which makes the game even more interesting) was published by the same firm. (See my 'Delights of Chess', pp 126-129).

In the series of *Averbakh's* truly important researches the section *Bishop v. Knight Endings* at *Batsford* for £4.50) is crammed full of highly interesting material, particularly in the P plus sections of B or Kt respectively. I wish I had more space for it but in **B** solvers will find one of the exceptional cases of a win.

A useful re-issue is *Edward Lasker's* six-year-old *Chess* (at *Batsford* for £3.50) simply because its entertaining and copious use of questions and answers gives it particular didactic value. Take the position Colle-O'Hanlon: /r1bq3r/pp1kt1pp1/3bp1k1/6Kt1l/3p3P/2P5/PP3PP1/R1BQR1K1/.

The student who gave 14) . . . Rh8 as Black's best move will learn that this, indeed, is what O'Hanlon played to guard against the P-check and hoping to counter Qd3† by . . . f5. But Colle floored him by 15) Re6!†ll, the Rook taboo because of Qd3†, but after . . . Ktf6 came 16) h5†, Kh6 (forced); 17) Rd6!†, Qa5; 17) Ktf7†, etc.

More good didactic value for the moderately advanced player is available in Ludek *Pachman's* 184 pp of *Complete Chess Strategy* (at *Batsford* for £2.95), this volume dealing with Pawns in its first part and then, at lesser length, with the Centre.

For children, published by *Faber* at £2.50 we have Elaine *Pritchard's* neatly produced *The Young Chess Player*, just over 100 pp of rudimentary instruction. I think it could well go a little further by way of instructive games.

The 4-pointer for beginners is a position in which White's next move caused immediate resignation. Why is Black in fatal zugzwang? For 6 ladder points **B** is one of those exceptional wins, enforced in a mere 4 moves. **C** is from *Averbakh's* book too and also a win, this time enforced in 5 moves. Usual prizes, entries by 14 June.

A: Gligoric-Szabo 1963: /7k/3P2bp/1p1rB3/p1p2R2/P7/1P6/7P/7K/.

B: Prokes 7/Kt/4kp2/8/7P/6P1/7b/8/1K6/.

C: V. Kosek 1923: /8/Kb6/1Pk5/8/7Kt/24/.

Report on No 1379

Set 23 April

A: 1) Bd6! (taboo on account of the Bh7† threat); by . . . Kh8 Black hoped to get away with loss of exchange, but 2) Kte2ll cost the full piece.

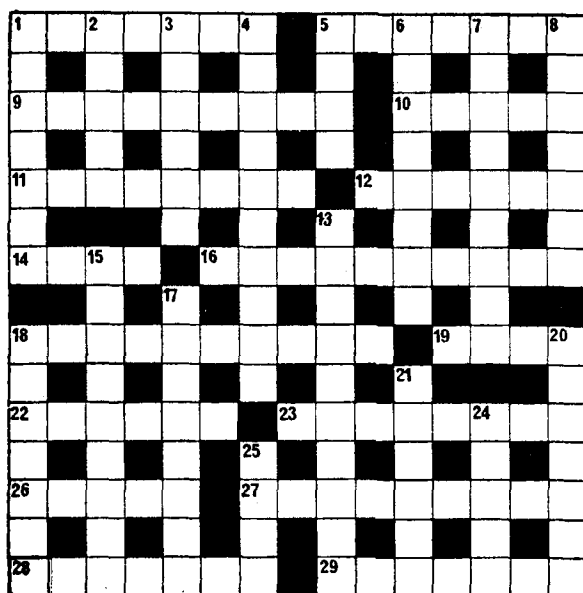
B: 1) Be4†, Kg8; 2) Kth6†, gh.; 3) Bd5†, Kh7; 4) Kth8†ll, Qf8; 5) Be4†, Kg8; 6) Bd5†, etc.

C: 1) Ra2ll, Bg1 (. . . Ktf1 countered by 2) Ke1); 2) Rg2, Kf3! (plenty of counter-chances); 3) Rg1, Kf2; 4) Re1, e4!; 5) Kte6 (only chance to meet threatened P-push), e3; 6) Ktc5! (Ktf4? leading to draw by perpetual), e2†; 7) Kd2, Ktf1†; 8) Kc1l, Ke1; (Nothing else); 9) Ktd3††.

Bouquets for **C**. Prizes: S. N. Collings, M. Cortacans, H. Garfath, W. H. M. Lemmey (17), C. Sansom.

Weekend Crossword 1167

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1167, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 15 June.



ACROSS

1. Thief from Rheims (7).
5. The curve in a suit reveals the body (7).
9. Preserve mother and son in the sea (9).
10. Strikes and shares (5).
11. Inscriptions show mine to be in the wrong shape (8).
12. Ancient writer discovers one in an island (6).
14. Potentially pass although they aren't very clever (4).
16. Spendour of fish with a nice twisted tail (10).
18. Sad if marry obscurely in country places (10).
19. Poems held in good esteem (4).
22. Pioneer airman who was nearly all bird (6).
23. Battlefield means nought to a composer . . . (8).
26. . . . and has expression of contempt about this sculptor (5).
27. Port for which vessels turn back with annoyance (9).
28. In America speed is pursuing me (7).

29. Made an appointment so that dry test might be used (7).

DOWN

1. Dress for play (7).
2. Animal which takes part in Bacchic orgies (5).
3. Plays for two weights (6).
4. Meteorologist who gives us an article about a means of measuring heat (10).
5. People aboard sounded triumphant (4).
6. Hold back others before there is bad weather (8).
7. Education is spoilt when sold (9).
8. 'History is the — of innumerable biographies' (Carlyle) (7).
13. Showing off spectator about to strike a young man before beginning of tie (10).
15. High estate in which I am involved with modern privy councillor (9).
17. Bulb in which any hitch may be seen (8).
18. Indian city in vague outline (7).

20. Cures do go wrong although thoroughly cleaned (7).
21. Outdoor occupation for child without healthy look (6).
24. Bar given in refusing others permission (5).
25. River god (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1165

DYNAMICS IAMBUS
O O A H M A U
MONTREAL HEARTS
A E R N R B P
INTROIT PRIMATE
N S W I R C R N
S E C R E T A R I E S
A S L D C E
BEWILDERING
S A E E C R B P
CENTAUR ADIPOSE
O K N M M W N
NATADS BEFALLEN
D N E N C E E
SUGARY ATTENDED

Prizewinners to No 1165

Mrs M. Stansfield (Blackburn)
P. Antwis (Rochester)
Ms H. Schofield (London WC1)

APPOINTMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO Dunedin, New Zealand

ASSISTANT LECTURER OR LECTURER IN RUSSIAN

Applications are invited for the position of Assistant Lecturer or Lecturer in the Department of Russian Language and Literature.

Salary Scales: Assistant Lecturer NZ\$6,057 - \$7,455 per annum; Lecturer NZ\$8,309 - \$10,360 per annum.

Further particulars are available from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (Appts), 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF, or from the Registrar of the University.

Applications close on 15 July 1976.

A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN'S PLAY

requires a

CO-ORDINATING SECRETARY

with sound administrative and secretarial ability to run the Campaign's H.Q. and co-ordinate the activities of its staff and Committee members. Should be capable of working as part of small team, and have interest in children's play.

Salary £2,900 p.a. and four weeks' holiday. Contact Fair Play for Children, 237 Pentonville Road, London N1, or 'phone 01-278 5314. Closing date for applications: Monday, 21 June

NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS

Applications are invited for the following post:

PERSONAL SECRETARY

to assist Union Official responsible for negotiations on teachers' and other related staffs' salaries. Good shorthand and typing required. Previous experience of trade union and committee work would be an advantage. Salary £2,529 - £2,853 plus £381 London Allowance. 35 hour week. Contributory superannuation scheme. 4 weeks' holiday.

Applications giving details of qualifications and experience should be sent not later than 18 June 1976 to the Organising Secretary, National Union of Teachers, Hamilton House, Mableton Place, London WC1H 9BD.

MEDICAL SECRETARIES and receptionists urgently required for doctors and hospitals, perm. and temp. M. & S. Agency, 124 Gloucester Road, SW7. 373 7185.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

required by

CIVIL SERVICE TRADE UNION

to work in a small and lively office. Duties include bookkeeping, PAYE etc., recording minutes of committee meetings, and general office administration.

A salary within the range £3,170-£4,445 p.a. is offered according to age, experience and qualifications for a 5-day week with 4 weeks annual leave: Non-contributory superannuation scheme. Please apply giving full details and names of two referees to the General Secretary, Association of First Division Civil Servants, Minster House, 272/4 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1, by 21 June 1976.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT IN HOUSING

THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

is about to start a series of studies on the economic and social effects of Housing Associations. This work is being supported by the Department of the Environment and the Housing Corporation. We are looking for someone who will have an interest in housing, and adopt a practical and analytical approach to research, to assist our Research Officer.

A background in economics or social administration, a basic knowledge of statistics, and some experience in applied research would be valuable.

Salary at least £3,000. Please write giving details of your experience, and why you could do this job, to: Nigel King, Research Officer, NFHA, 86 Strand, WC2 OEG.

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Sound knowledge of Third World issues essential and the ability to relate these to War on Want's home and overseas programmes. Must be able to write in a clear and non-technical style.

Salary around £3,400 p.a.

CAMPAIGN OFFICER

to translate our research and overseas work into public action in England and Wales to further our campaign against world poverty; to work particularly through the adult education field; Trade Unions and other organised groups.

Qualities required are: a progressive concept of development education; sound knowledge of Third World issues and their relationship to Britain; ability to communicate succinctly; the energy and understanding to motivate people; some experience of grass-root activity or voluntary agencies.

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Applications with full CV by 16 June to the General Secretary, War on Want, 467 Caledonian Road, London N7 9BE.

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requires a

RESEARCH OFFICER

to conduct a pilot study of the changing relationship between statutory and voluntary personal social services and the implications of these changes for the manpower and training needs of voluntary organisations. Experience of social science research and possession of a relevant degree would be helpful. The appointment is for 12 months in the first instance.

Salary Scale £3,945-£4,945 p.a. inclusive of London Weighting Allowance. Entry point according to qualifications and experience. Four weeks annual leave. Superannuation Scheme. Further details and application form from Administrator, NCSS, 26 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3HU. Tel: 01-636 4066.

Closing date: 21 June 1976.



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Further details and application forms can be obtained from the Administrative Officer, Southern Arts Association, 19 Southgate Street, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 9EB. The closing date for applications is the end of June 1976.

The Carnegie United Kingdom Trust

The Trustees of this charitable foundation, which is concerned with the improvement of the well-being of the masses of the people of Great Britain and Ireland, expect to appoint a Secretary and Treasurer later this year.

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Theatres

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HAMPSTEAD THEATRE, 722 9301. 'Dom Juan', by Molière. Nightly at 8 p.m., Sats 5 & 8. Tickets £1.75, £1 Students 75p.

LYTTLETON (New National Theatre) 928 2252. Fri. at 7.45. Sat. 2.30 & 7.45 'Plunder', by Ben Travers. Mon. & Tues. at 7 'Hamlet'. Wed. & Thurs. at 2.30 & 7.45 'Watch It Come Down'. Over 100 excellent £1 seats on sale day of performance.

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Poetry

'BLOOMSDAY' Reading in honour of James Joyce, with Paddy Joyce (James Joyce's nephew), Patrick Reilly & Patricia Levinton reading from 'Ulysses', 'Dubliners' & Joyce's letters to Nora. Also young Irish poets, Augustus Young & Matthew Sweeney. Sun. 6 June, 7.45 p.m., Wine Bar, King's Arms Pub, Sloane Sq, SW1. Adm. 50p. Students 30p. OAPs, 20p. Inq. phone 730 1885. Organiser.

MORLEY COLLEGE. Prose reading and discussion. Margaret Drabble, Giles Gordon, George MacBeth. Tuesday 15 June 7 p.m. Admission 15p.

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Meetings

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CENTRAL LONDON FABIAN SOCIETY. Polly Gasker, of the Angolan Solidarity Committee, on 'Conflict in Southern Africa'. 7.30 p.m. 9 June. 5 Tavistock Place, WC1. Collection: all welcome.

FERNANDO ARRABAL will lead a discussion on 'le théâtre contemporain' on Tuesday 8 June at 6.15 p.m. at the French Institute, Queensbury Place, London, SW7. Tel: 01-589 6211 ext 38. Admission free.

DISCUSSION and media presentation of Inter-Action's work by Ed Berman 7.30 p.m. 9 June. Opportunity to discuss Summer Volunteering and full-time job opportunities with the organisation. Inter-Action, 14 Talacre Road, NW5. Further info: Wendy Buonaventura (01) 267 1422.

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THEOSOPHY. Public Talk & Questions. Sun. 6 June 8 p.m. Free. 'God, an Evolving Idea'. S.a.e. for programme, book list & literature. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2.

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